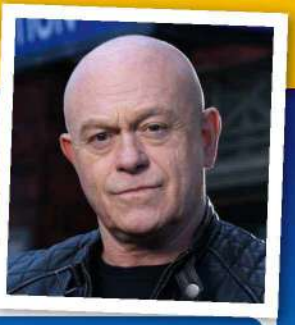
NEW SERIES PREVIEW! MEET THE 2025 CELEBRITIES



BRITAIN'S BESTSELLING FAMILY HISTORY MAGAZINE

ISSUE 230 MAY 2025 £5.75

WHO DO YOU THINK YOU ARE?®

VICTORY IN EUROPE

How Britain celebrated the end of the war with Germany – and the best tools to uncover *your* family's WW2 stories

VE DAY ANNIVERSARY 80 YEARS COMMEMORATIVE ISSUE

17TH-CENTURY PERILS How did our ancestors survive?

THE BRITISH IN INDIA Find records with our expert tips

I found out my mum was a spy during the Cold War

MASTERS AND MATES Reveal the sailors in your family

ENGLISH CIVIL WAR Did your family support Roundheads or Cavaliers?

ALSO IN THIS ISSUE

- Discover your Norfolk roots
- Transcribe handwriting with ChatGPT
- Reuniting families with old photos

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Welcome

Sarah's Top Tip

Use online newspaper archives to search for your living relations

One of our readers sent in a query this month regarding an Irish relative ('Q&A', **page 48**), and our expert Nicola Morris found useful clues in local newspapers online. It was a reminder that, as the digitisation of newspaper archives continues at pace, many of the collections are coming up closer to the present day. Inspired by Nicola's answer I searched the newspaper archive on Findmypast (**findmypast.co.uk**), and I found my father mentioned in an article from 2002! It can be hard to trace more recent relatives as so many records are closed under privacy laws. Newspapers, however, are a handy exception.

There is something deeply moving about great historic moments falling out of living memory. The nation mourned the death of Harry Patch in 2009, the last surviving serving Tommy of the First World War, and, as Alan Crosby mentions in his column (**page 13**), it won't be long before we lose the last of those who served during the Second World War. However, there are still many among us who will remember VE Day on the home front, from street parties to an extra day off school! As we approach the 80th anniversary of the end of war in Europe, let's make sure that we record those memories. Remembering the times when we worked and celebrated together for a common purpose has never felt more important.

In this special issue we explore how the cessation of war was anything but a simple process for those serving in Europe (**page 14**). We also look at what it meant to those at home (**page 56**), including those who couldn't share in the general jubilation. Unfortunately, the war wasn't over for everyone and we will be remembering those who were still fighting in the Far East later in the year.

This month also sees a new series of *WDYTYA?* coming to our TVs (**page 24**). We can't wait! Follow us on social media and sign up to our newsletter to get all of the latest on the episodes and more.

Sarah

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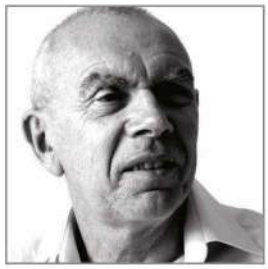
Contributors

Phil Tomaselli
Military historian Phil contributes to our 'Q&A' section every issue (**page 45**), but this month he goes deeper into what our serving kin experienced during VE Day (**page 14**).

Janet Few
Janet's passion for the 17th century resulted in her novel *Sins as Red as Scarlet*, about a Devon town in 1682. On **page 21** she asks, could you survive the perils of that time?



Mike Trenchard
Mike is one half of research service Trenchard Partnership (**trenchardpartnership.co.uk**). He specialises in records kept by the British in India, and shares tips on **page 32**.

COVER IMAGE: GETTY IMAGES/SOLDIERS AND SAILORS ON LEAVE JOIN IN THE VE DAY CELEBRATIONS

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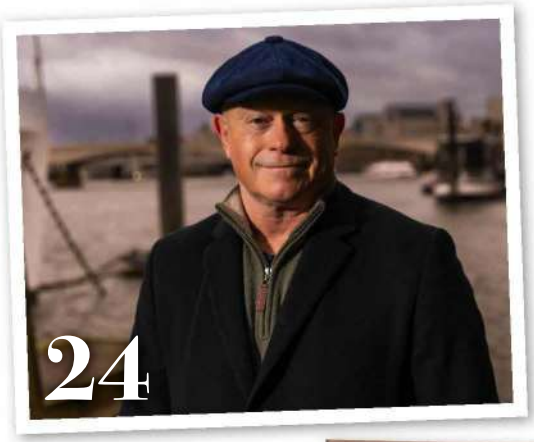

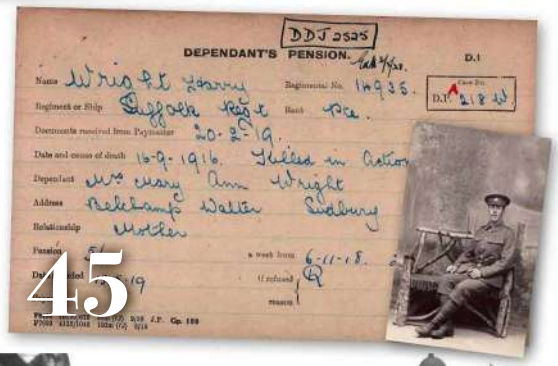

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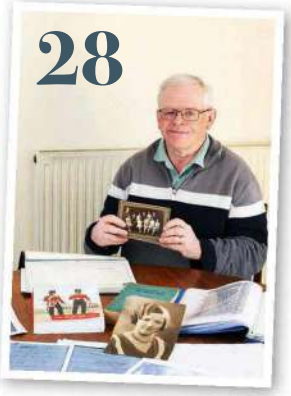

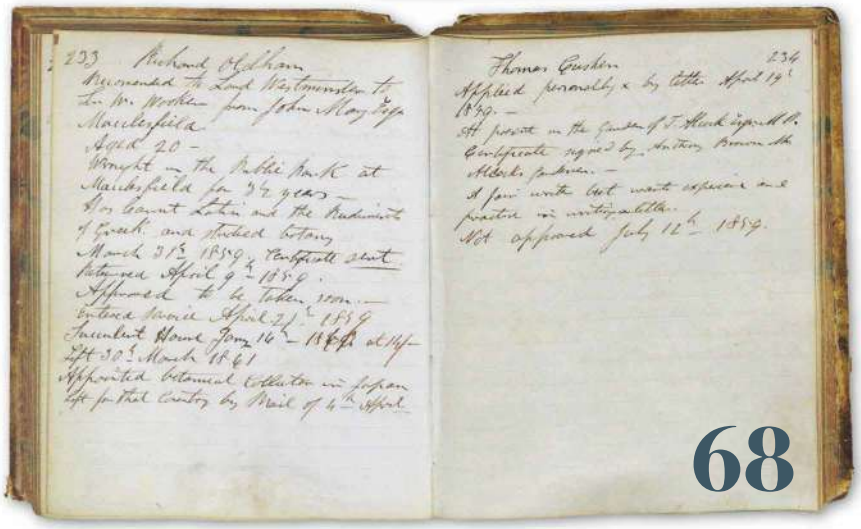

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Email *wdytyaeditorial@ourmedia.co.uk*
Write to *WDYTYA? Magazine*, Eagle House, Bristol BS1 4ST

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Family Records Of VE Day

STAR LETTER

As a subscriber and avid watcher of the TV programme I thought I would share one of my own projects, especially relevant as we approach the 80th anniversary of VE Day.

In May we will be publishing the diaries of my grandfather S John Teague, who was just 17 when war broke out (he lived to be 100, dying in 2022). He was transferred to the air-raid control centre in Camberwell Town Hall, and during the Blitz was tasked with requisitioning houses and rehoming bombed-out families.

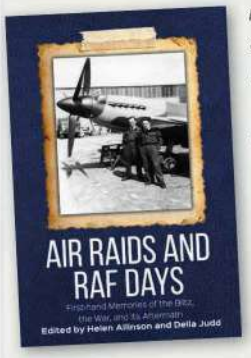
He later served in the RAF as a wireless mechanic and was stationed across Europe, returning home in 1946.

While compiling the diaries (which span 1938–1946) we discovered a batch of letters from 1945 from his parents.

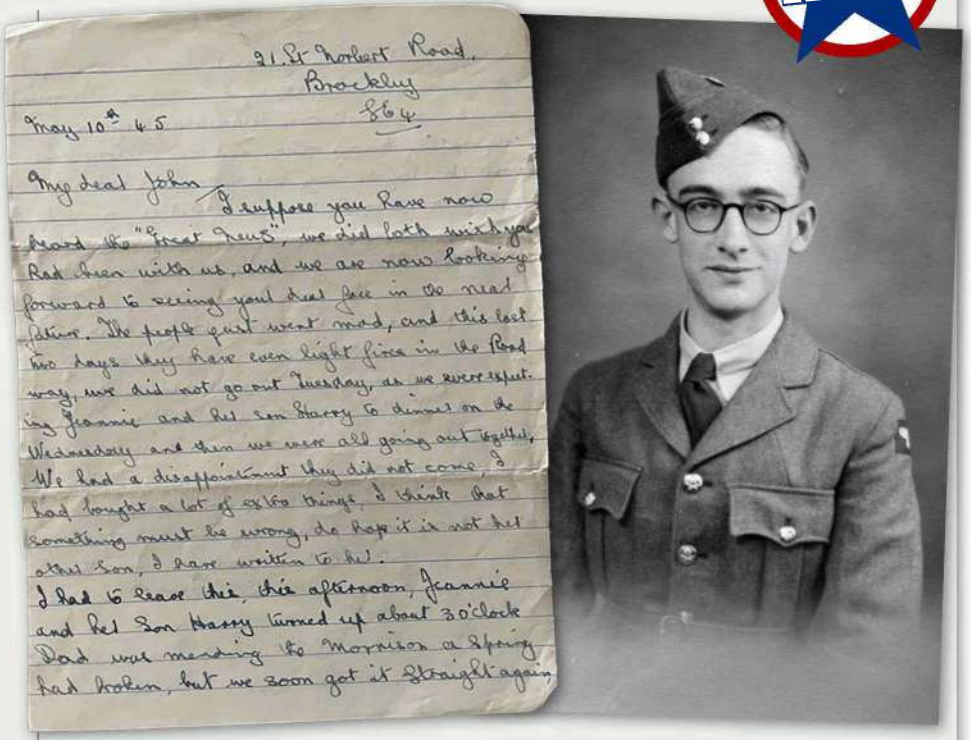
In May 1945 he wrote the following diary entries while posted in Brussels:

7 May
We drove back to Everre Airfield, parked our vehicles and went into the city where there was dancing and singing in the streets, tomorrow to be Victory Day in Europe! Treated incessantly to booze, back on midnight liberty bus as I was really on duty.

VE Day, 8 May
There were anti-royalist parades by the communists in Brussels, but otherwise all rejoicing, fireworks and guns fired by resistance people. Dancing in streets, girls kissing us, etc. Back 03:00, on duty, several kites to service and a Church Army van drove over to us at dispersal and served English tea and biscuits at 04:00, wonderful Christian men and women, no cussing was heard for a while!



Della's new book will be released in May



21 St Norbert Road,
Brockley
SE4

May 10th 45

My dear John
I suppose you have now heard the "Great News", we did both wish you had been with us, and we are now looking forward to seeing your dear face in the near future. The people just went mad, and this last two days they have even light fires in the Road way, we did not go out Tuesday, as we were expecting Jeannie and her son Harry to dinner on the Wednesday and then we were all going out together. We had a disappointment they did not come, I had bought a lot of extra things, I think that something must be wrong, do hope it is not her other Son, I have written to her.
I had to leave this, this afternoon, Jeannie and her Son Harry turned up about 3 o'clock Dad was mending the Morrison a Spring had broken, but we soon got it straight again,

Della has discovered a number of letters that her great grandparents wrote to her grandfather John

VE Day + 2
I had to drive back to Vilvordia, more of our equipment to be stuffed into our vans and drove to Nijmegen through awful battle areas, rotting cattle, bloated in the canals, stench of death, the German prisoners clearing up all salute us. Slept in the wagon by Rhine at Nijmegen.

And at the same time his parents in Deptford wrote to him:

10/05/45
My dear John,
I suppose you have now heard the Great News (VE Day, Victory in Europe). We did both wish you had been with us and we are now looking forward to seeing your dear face in the near future. The people just went mad, and this last two days they have even lit fires in the roadway…

He later used various resources at The National Archives, including War Diaries and bomb-damage maps, to help him look back over the events that he was in the middle of. Using the bomb-damage maps he could marry it with his own notes to see which bombs had caused damage to his parents' house in Norbert Road, Deptford. And using the War Diaries from his RAF squadron he could see the bigger picture of his own involvement.
Della Judd, by email

Editor Replies **What a wonderful treasure trove of family history you have there Della. Good luck with publishing your grandfather's diaries, and I hope you enjoy Phil Tomaselli and Jad Adams' articles about VE Day this month.**

Women At War

In Janet Few's article about researching your female line in the March issue, she wrote, "it is only recently that women have been allowed to join the armed forces" but, unless by "recently" she means within the past 100 years, that is not strictly true. On its excellent website **nam.ac.uk**, the National Army Museum states of the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps (WAAC) formed in 1917 that this "was the first time women had served in the British Army other than as nurses". Some 57,000 women joined up between 1917 and 1921, my eldest aunt included. A smaller number joined the Women's Royal Naval Service (WRNS) and the Women's Air Force (WRAF). In the Second World War women again served in equivalent organisations. The women were not combatants, but were just as much a part of the military forces as male service corps. In the First World War, 9,000 went to France, 81 lost their lives and five were awarded the Military Medal.

The National Archives holds their records, and some are also held in the Imperial War Museum, from which I learnt much about my aunt's service including that she was promoted to the unusual rank of 'quartermistress'.

Derek Turner, by email

Derek believes the woman on the left is his aunt Ida Summerhayes during her time in the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps

Sue Coulter responded to our guide to tracing Caribbean relations: tinyurl.com/wdytya-caribbean
My ancestor read the proclamation freeing the slaves in Trinidad. Then he put in a claim for compensation for the loss of his cook. Not an ancestor that I'm proud of.

Editor Replies **Thank you for this Derek, and the wonderful photographs of your aunt and other members of the WAAC. I wish we could print them all!**

RNIB's Golden Age

I just wanted to drop you a note of appreciation for Caroline Roberts' article about blindness in your March issue. I worked for the Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB) for 12 years, starting in 1994 in the reference library. This was based in Great Portland Street, London, during what I think we all consider RNIB's 'golden era', under the guidance of dear Ian Bruce. The reference library was mainly print books about blindness, with the aim of supporting the professional development of those working with blind people. However, we also stocked some alternative formats and many blind and partially sighted people used the service. Among our patrons were a number of men from nearby St Dunstan's who had been blinded in the Second World War. How I wish I could turn back the clock. I was in my 20s then. There is so much I wish I'd asked that generation that is now gone.

When I was with the RNIB, the organisation was much as you described, with a foot in the past. However, it was a glorious past, steeped in philanthropy and a strong desire to improve social inclusion and life chances for disabled people. As you correctly note, there was far too much basketweaving and piano-tuning, although that was to change with the advent of what we now call 'digital media' and the worldwide web (I moved on from the library to be RNIB's website editor and then digital policy manager).

I fondly remember sitting in meetings where older blind men would take notes in braille by poking holes through thick paper with a metal stylus, having learned to do so 'back to front' so the raised dots they created were 'legible' by touch when you turned the paper over. This technique has long-since been replaced by much faster touch-typing on portable machines.

Caroline's article was very well researched, and I found myself nodding along with fond recollections of a wonderful place to work. Alas, the voluntary sector has changed a lot since those days and we cannot turn the clock back. But thank you for reminding me of how fortunate I was to work in such a place at such a glorious time.

Julie Stevenson, Peterborough

Editor Replies **We're so glad you enjoyed the article Julie.**

Liverpool Link

I read with interest Caroline Roberts' article about blindness in the March issue, but with a little disappointment too. You see, I was hoping to find out a little more about my 3x great grandfather Richard Chew, who was born blind on 30 August 1799 in Liverpool to George and Mary Chew. George was a sawyer so was not that rich, but his son Richard had the good fortune to go to Britain's first blind school which was founded in Liverpool in 1791. The Liverpool School for the Indigent Blind was founded by Edward Rushton, and still exists today as the Royal School for the Blind. It was the second such school in the world (the first was founded in Paris in 1785).

Of course, I didn't know my 3x great grandfather, but am very proud of him because despite being blind and although he only lived for 29 years, he became the organist of Trinity Church Liverpool, a musician and a music teacher after he had left the school in 1816. He got married a couple of years later and he and his wife, Ann Carter, went on to have six children, the eldest of whom became my great great grandmother, Esther Chew.

You may wonder how I learnt he was blind. Well, I stumbled on the document *An Address in Favour of the School for the Blind in Liverpool, Instituted in the Year MDCCXCI* from 1817. I found it on the Internet Archive (**archive.org**) in the Wellcome Library ▶

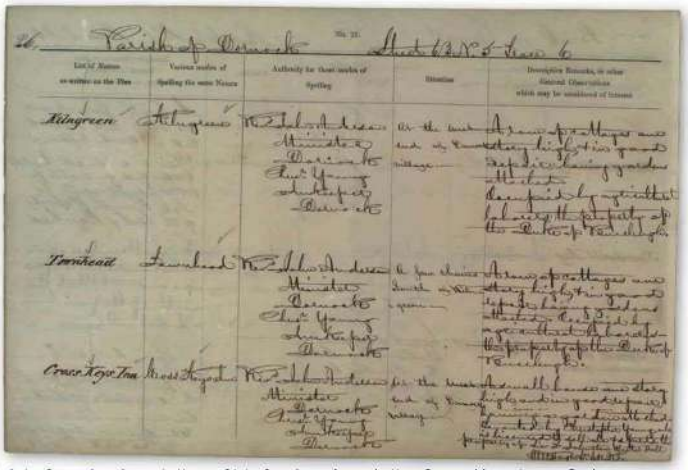
Collection. It refers to Richard Chew by name, giving the date he left the school and the organist job he had attained. It also provides a drawing of the outside view of the school. A floorplan of the inside is also given, as well as details of a visit by the Prince of Wales in 1806 when he became a patron and donated 100 guineas. The intake consisted of male and female pupils who came from all over the British Isles.

This isn't the first time I have learnt about my ancestors from the Internet Archive. I knew my maternal grandmother Jane Hawkins had died in the influenza epidemic in 1919, but I discovered she had died in the third wave of the epidemic from retrieving the *Annual Report of the School Medical Officer* of Bootle for 1919, also in the Wellcome Library Collection.

Younger people don't seem to be aware of the importance of Liverpool in the history of the British Empire and transatlantic trade, apart from its transitory connection with the slave trade. The population of the Liverpool area declined from the 1960s on, as industry and traditional shipping routes declined. But anyone, such as myself, who has ancestors that go back hundreds of years in the area can trace the fantastic growth of the city during the 19th century. So Liverpudlians, be proud of where you are from – whether they were dockers, carters or blind musicians, your ancestors helped build this country.

Keith Robert Hose, by email

Editor Replies **Thank you for highlighting the great work done by this pioneering school Keith. The book you discovered online also has a long list of donors to the school, so if any readers have prosperous family members from the area, they may want to see if they are included.**



Iain found a description of his forebear's pub the Cross Keys in an Ordnance Survey Name Book that is freely available on the website ScotlandsPlaces

Map Resource

Many congratulations on the article in the March issue about using maps. May I add one other part of the story that fellow readers might find helpful?

The surveyors who made the early Ordnance Survey (OS) maps asked people they regarded as reliable witnesses to confirm the names of places, recording the results in Name Books – many of which survive. Those covering Scotland have been digitised and are freely available via the website ScotlandsPlaces (**scotlandsplaces.gov.uk/digital-volumes/ordnance-survey-name-books**). For England and Wales, surviving Name Books are at The National Archives (**tinyurl.com/tna-guide-os-records-places**).

The Name Books often include fascinating details. In the village of Dornock, Dumfriesshire, for example, they consulted my 3x great grandfather, Christopher Young, and recorded this invaluable description of the pub he ran, the Cross Keys: "A small house one story high, and in good repair; having a garden attached tenanted by Christopher Young, who is licensed to sell ale & spirits – the property of Sir F Johnston Wester Hall."

Sometimes the surveyors' opinions get the better of them, as in this description of the street in Leven, Fife, where my great great grandfather Robert Campbell lived: "A narrow dirty street running parallel with the High Street badly paved and lighted. The houses are generally two stories high chiefly occupied by factory operatives and labourers with a few small shops and 2 or 3 low public houses interspersed."

My ancestor – later a highly respected townsman – might be rather affronted by those words, but to me as a family historian they're hugely valuable.

Iain Mackinnon, London

Editor Replies **What a great resource for anyone researching Scottish roots. I think I've found my 3x great grandfather in the records for Carnwath.**

@mrsaj007.bsky.social commented on our article on friendly societies (tinyurl.com/wdytya-friendly)
My great grandad was a member of the Oddfellows – I have his draft letters written to his lodge advising them he had changed his address and to his mother to pay his subscription.

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What's On

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PICK OF THE MONTH

Learn how to improve your research skills at this Merseyside event

The Family History Show

3 May
a Aintree Racecourse, Liverpool
w **thefamilyhistoryshow.com/liverpool/**

The Family History Show comes to Liverpool in May. As usual, there will be a programme of expert talks, including 'Upstairs Downstairs' by Jackie Depelle, 'Breaking Down Brick Walls in Your Family History Research' by Mark Bayley, 'Tracing Your Industrial Labourer Ancestors' by Nick Barratt *(pictured)* and 'Taking Your DNA Results Further' by regular *WDYTYA? Magazine* contributor Debbie Kennett. There will also be the chance to book a free one-to-one consultation for help with brick walls, with experts on topics including family history, house history, DNA and military history. You can visit stalls from family history organisations and companies as well. £8 in advance (two tickets for £14), £12 on the day.

IN PERSON

Traces Of Belsen

Until 10 July
a The Wiener Holocaust Library, London
t 020 7636 7247
w **wienerholocaustlibrary.org/exhibition/traces-of-belsen/**

Find out more about the history of Bergen-Belsen 80 years after the camp was liberated. Free.

Voices Of Resistance: Slavery And Post In The Caribbean

Until 5 January 2026
a The Postal Museum, London
t 0300 0300 700
w **postalmuseum.org/event/voices-of-resistance/**

This major exhibition on the connections between the British postal service and slavery is free with admission to the museum (£17.60 if booked in advance).

Secrets Of The Thames

Until 1 March 2026
a London Museum Docklands
t 020 7030 3300
w **londonmuseum.org.uk/whats-on/secrets-thames/**

You can view more than 350 objects recovered by 'mudlarks' at this event. £16.

Just A Job

24 April
a Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Tilehurst
t 0118 950 9553
w **tinyurl.com/berksfhs-just-job**

Dr Sophie Kay shares her expert tips for occupational research in family history. Free to members of Berkshire Family History Society, £5 for non-members.

Suffolk Family History Society Fair

26 April
a The Hold, Ipswich
w **suffolkfhs.co.uk/index.php/pages/view/society-fair**

This event features talks from Ian Waller, Nick Barratt and head of Suffolk Archives Judith Berry, and displays and stalls from family history organisations. Free.

Heritage Fair – Northamptonshire 2025

27 April
a Chester House Estate, Wellingborough
e *northantsheritagefair@gmail.com*
w **northants-fhs.org/fairs-events/**

Northamptonshire Family History Society's Heritage Fair will feature stalls, talks, archaeological tours, and archive film shows. Free.

One Of Our Own

2 May
a St Mary's Church Hall, Bedford
e *secretary@bfhs.org.uk*
w **bfhs.org.uk/talks.html**

Author David Duker will tell the story of St Neots-born Victor Ekins, a Battle of Britain pilot and squadron leader. Small charge, or free to Bedfordshire Family History Society members.

Family History: Delving Deeper

13 May
a Eastwood House, Giffnock
e *artsandheritage@ercultureandleisure.org*
w **tinyurl.com/delving-kinnaird/**

This half-day course from East Renfrewshire Culture & Leisure, led by Lorna Kinnaird, is aimed at anyone with family history experience who would like to take their skills further. £35.

Women's Lives In Clyde Shipbuilding Communities

15 May
a National Library of Scotland, Edinburgh
e *nlsevents@nls.uk*
w **tinyurl.com/nls-women-clyde**

Dr Hugh Hagan uses oral testimonies to explore the role of shipyard wives in Port Glasgow and Greenock. Free.

IN PERSON & ONLINE

Stories From Hospitals Back Home During The First World War

29 April
a Royal College of Nursing Scotland HQ, Edinburgh
t 0131 662 6163
w **tinyurl.com/rcn-stories-ww1**

This panel discussion explores the role that Voluntary Aid Detachments played in military hospitals in Britain. Free.

Once Visited Never Forgotten: St Andrew's Asylum/Hospital

30 April
a Norfolk Record Office, Norwich
t 01603 222599
w **tinyurl.com/eventbrite-nro-once**

Dale Wiseman tells the story of the Norfolk asylum. Free.

ONLINE

House History Tracing With Cathy Soughton

Starts 30 April
w **tinyurl.com/sog-soughton**

Discover how to trace the history of your home with this four-week course delivered over Zoom. £77 for members of the Society of Genealogists, otherwise £97.

BOOK AHEAD

Find out about POWs' experiences in the Second World War

POW80

7 June
a The Midland Hotel, Manchester
w **tinyurl.com/eventbrite-pow80**

This event, organised by the Online Memorial and Museum of Prisoners of War (**prisonersofwarmuseum.com**), marks the 80th anniversary of the liberation of Allied POWs at the end of the Second World War, and includes expert talks on such topics as 'Evasion and Escape' and 'Working Camps'. £109.05.

News

Rosemary Collins reports on the latest data releases and genealogy news

Ancestry adds 10.9 million West Dunbartonshire records

Almost 11 million records from West Dunbartonshire in Scotland have been added to Ancestry (ancestry.co.uk).

The records have been published by the firm thanks to a new partnership with West Dunbartonshire Council.

Councillor William Rooney, the council's convenor of corporate services, explained that the records' digitisation was "a transformative moment in historical research and public access for West Dunbartonshire".

The material includes three sets of index-only parish records held by West Dunbartonshire Arts & Heritage Service: 4,991,735 baptism records (1615–1854), 3,150,429 marriage records (1615–1845) and 497,944 burial records (1655–1854). They cover modern-day Dunbartonshire, Stirlingshire, Argyll, Renfrewshire and Lanarkshire.

Ancestry has also added index-only sets of 1,821,383 valuation-roll records (1855–1930) and 280,033 burial register and memorial-inscription records (1855–2024).

The following record sets with the digitised original documents have been published as well: 1914–1918 electoral register records and 1600–1846 burgess-roll records, totalling 61,546 altogether; 50,992 school records from 1834–1922; 3,123 prison register records from 1790–1824; 6,001 military muster-roll records from 1890–1917; 44,218 nonconformist parish register records from 1840–1969; registers of employees of the shipbuilding company William Denny & Brothers Ltd from 1901–1915, totalling 957 records; 23,097 city and county directory records from 1877–1893; and 20,661 Poor Law applications and registers records from 1846–1914.

Boilermaking Department.

HEAD FOREMAN.
STEEL, JOHN.

FOREMEN.
HART, WILLIAM.
M'INTOSH, JAMES.
MURRAY, CHARLES.
STEEL, DAVID.

PLATERS and JOBBERS.
Campbell, James.
Gowans, William.
Grant, James.
Inglis, Allan.
Joyce, Peter.
Kinloch, John.
Lawrence, James.
Logan, William.
M'Kay, George.
M'Kenzie, Archibald.
M'Kenzie, James.
M'Kenzie, John.
Mansbridge, Frank.
Montgomery, John.
Richmond, William.
Sayers, Alexander.
Speedie, Thomas.
Storrie, Robert.
Strachan, James.
Weir, John.
Wilson, William.
Wood, James.

RIVETERS and CAULKERS.
Brown, John.
Campbell, James.
Galloway, Thomas.
Goldie, Michael.
Hart, Daniel.
Hart, John.
Kilgour, Samuel.
Kerr, Thomas.
M'Crimmon, Donald.
M'Culloch, James.
M'Kenzie, David
M'Whinnie, David.
M'Whinnie, William.
Mair, Hugh.
Mair, John.
Mair, William.
Malcolm, John.
Porter, James.
Porter, Joseph.
Reddoch, John.
Richmond, James.
Sherridan, John.
Speedie, William.
Watt, James.

APPRENTICES.
Abercromby, Duncan.
Abercromby, Hugh.
Barr, Peter.
Bird, John.
Boyle, Neil.
Burnett, James.
Campbell, Archibald.
Campbell, Donald.
Clark, James.
Dixon, George.
Garvan, John.
Gowans, John.
Hatton, James.
Kearney, Thomas.
Kelly, James.
Kinloch, Archibald.
Lennan, John.
Lynn, Henry.
M'Fadyen, Donald.
M'Kenzie, William.
M'Menemy, Hugh.
M'Phail, Duncan.
Nicol, Thomas.
Nimmo, William.
Orr, Robert.
Porter, Charles.
Porter, Thomas.
Rennie, John.
Rennie, Thomas.
Skinner, Andrew.
Storrie, Joseph.
Strachan, Peter.
Speedie, John.
Vallance, Alexander.
Ward, John.
Watt, Matthew.
Wilkinson, John.

ENGINEER.
Blackwood, James.

MACHINISTS.
Arnott, George.
Andrews, William.
Barclay, David.
Barnes, Robert.
Brand, Robert.
Cullen, Daniel.
Dale, Robert (2).
Dobbin, Andrew.
Fulton, Donald.
Fulton, Hugh.
Houston, David.
Johnstone, William.
M'Crimmon, Donald.
M'Fadyen, John.
M'Whinnie, David.
Milliken, Blair.
Robin, James.
Shaw, John.
Skinner, William (2).

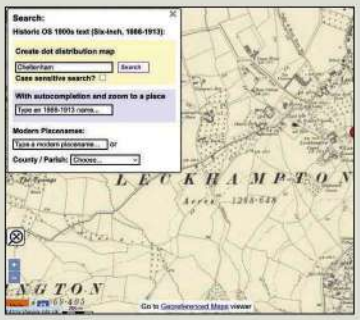
Various historically significant people can be found in the records. For example, the baptism records include that of Tobias George Smollet, son of Archibald and Barbara Smollet, on 19 March 1721 in Cardross. Tobias Smollett (his surname is spelled differently in the record) became a writer, one of the first to pioneer the novel form in English.

There is also the baptism of William Buchanan, son of Archibald and Mary Buchanan, on 28 March 1830 in Dumbarton. William Buchanan emigrated to the USA with his family as a child. He is known for designing high-speed steam locomotives for the New York Central Railroad, including the New York Central and Hudson River Railroad No. 999 locomotive.

The William Denny & Brothers Ltd registers, meanwhile, are an important collection relating to a major employer in Dumbarton. The company was founded in 1840 and closed in 1963.

Simon Pearce, family history expert at Ancestry, commented, "The beautiful hand-painted illustrations in the 1901 Denny's shipbuilding employee records *(pictured)* provide a surprising window into the pride and importance of employee records at the time."

NEWS IN BRIEF



An example of the text viewer in operation

National Library of Scotland improves maps site with new text viewer

The National Library of Scotland (NLS; **nls.uk**) has added a new text viewer to its free maps website **maps.nls.uk** that allows researchers to cross-reference place names from the GB1900 project with historic maps of England, Scotland and Wales. More than 2.5 million names from the NLS's collection of Ordnance Survey maps were transcribed by GB1900 volunteers between 2016 and 2018. The new tool, which is available at **tinyurl.com/1900-text-viewer**, allows researchers to search the names recorded on the 1888–1913 six-inch-to-the-mile series of maps.

MyHeritage's new Cousin Finder tool

MyHeritage launches Cousin Finder tool

Family history website MyHeritage (**myheritage.com**) has released Cousin Finder, a tool that makes it easier for users to match with distant cousins. MyHeritage describes Cousin Finder as "a new way to find DNA matches, but without a DNA test". It is available to all MyHeritage users who have the 'Smart Matches' feature enabled. The tool works by analysing Smart Matches to identify other users who share a common ancestor, and allows users to sort and filter their list of matches.

Back issues of the British Army's magazine go online

The complete archive of *Soldier*, the official magazine of the British Army launched during the Second World War, is now free to read online.

The Army published the back issues on **soldier.army.mod.uk/archive** to mark the magazine's 80th birthday.

Soldier was launched on 19 March 1945 as the brainchild of 'Monty', Field Marshal Bernard Montgomery, and was intended to boost the morale of soldiers serving in Europe.

In a "Message From the Chief" on the cover of the first issue Monty assures readers that "By no possible conceivable chance can Germany win this war", adding that he hopes that the "comradeship" between the "great armies" of the war will be "a powerful influence in the difficult days that will lie ahead when the fighting is over".

Soldier features news, puzzles and contributions from soldiers. In the first issue, for example, Lance Bombardier E Jelves recalls opening a shop selling sweets and cigarettes before the war, while Private F Burton writes, "I have two sisters [in the Auxiliary Territorial Service] who toiled in preparation for getting the stores across the channel on D-Day, sometimes working 14 hours a day."

The first issue of *Soldier* has a message from Monty on the cover

23andMe files for bankruptcy

23andMe (**23andme.com/en-gb**) has filed for bankruptcy protection in the US to facilitate a sale of the company and its assets.

The US firm, which is one of the largest DNA-testing companies in the world, has seen its share price plummet since it went public in February 2021, falling to $1.82 as of March 2025.

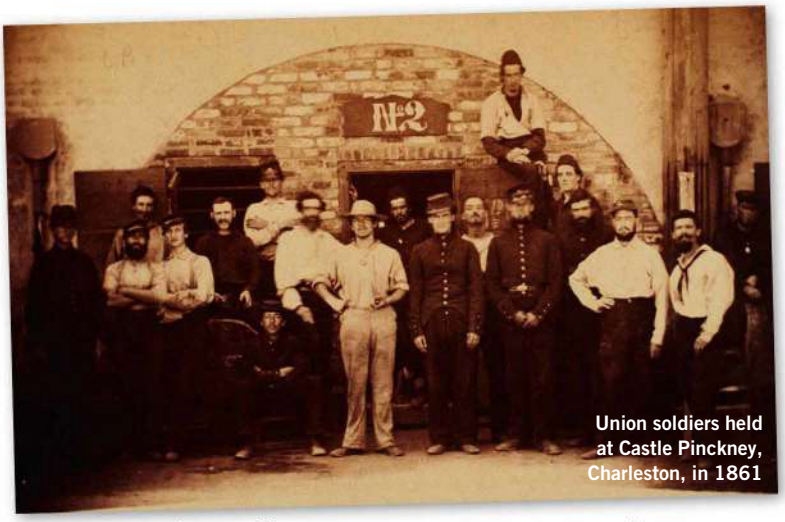
23andMe's headquarters in Sunnyvale, California

It also suffered a major cyber attack in October 2023, when hackers breached the accounts of about 14,000 customers.

Mark Jensen chairs the special committee of the firm's board of directors. He said, "We are committed to continuing to safeguard customer data and being transparent about the management of user data going forward, and data privacy will be an important consideration in any potential transaction."

You can learn how to download or delete your data from 23andMe's site at **whodoyouthinkyouaremagazine.com/tutorials/dna/how-to-download-23andme-data**.

GETTY IMAGES



Union soldiers held at Castle Pinckney, Charleston, in 1861

Records of American Civil War POWs released on Fold3

A total of 1,648,959 records of prisoners of war in the American Civil War have been added to military records website Fold3 (fold3.com).

The war was fought by the anti-slavery northern, or Union, states, and the pro-slavery southern, or Confederate, states in 1861–1865.

The collection consists of four sets of microfilm records from the US National Archives. Series M1303 records Union POWs who were held by Confederate authorities at Camp Sumter, Andersonville, Georgia, between February 1864 and April 1865; series M598 details Confederate POWs held by the Union (1861–1865); series M2072 records Confederates captured by the Union following the taking of Vicksburg, Mississippi, on 4 July 1863; and series M918 details Confederate prisoners who died in captivity (1861–1865).

Fold3 is accessible to anyone who has an 'All Access' subscription to family history website Ancestry (**ancestry.co.uk**).

Displays of human remains criticised

The wooden inner-coffin of Henutmehyt is on display at the British Museum, London

A Parliamentary committee has called for an end to the display of human remains in museums in the UK. On 12 March the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Afrikan Reparations published *Laying Ancestors to Rest*, a report on African ancestral remains held by British institutions, including mummified bodies and the remains of freedom fighters from the First Chimurenga Revolt (1896–1897) in modern-day Zimbabwe.

The report also called for the closure of legal loopholes allowing the sale of human remains over 100 years old, and a government inquiry into the extent of human remains in British museums. For more details, visit **tinyurl.com/afrikan-laying**.

67,733
The number of Welsh Catholic baptism records that have been added to **findmypast.co.uk**

IWM
The Imperial War Museum in London has faced criticism from families of Victoria Cross winners after deciding to close a gallery where the medals are displayed (**tinyurl.com/telegraph-iwm**)

Essex
The maps and records of the county from the 1910–1915 Lloyd George Domesday Survey have been published on **thegenealogist.co.uk**

Eric Morecambe
Nine of the comedy legend's notebooks, full of jokes, have been acquired by the University of York and will be held at the Borthwick Institute for Archives (**tinyurl.com/bbc-eric-jokes**)

113
The age of Rose Girone, the oldest known Holocaust survivor, who died in New York on 24 February (**tinyurl.com/guardian-girone**)

The museum UNITE will be located at Enniskillen Castle *(above)* and in Belfast

Plans announced for museum of the Irish in the British Army

Funding has been announced for a new museum across two sites in Northern Ireland, telling the story of the 350-year history of soldiers from the island of Ireland in the British Army.

The organisers of UNTOLD: Stories of the Irish in the British Army have been granted initial development funding of £249,239 from the National Lottery Heritage Fund, and will apply for a full grant of £1,721,595 at a later date.

The museum will be located in a former linen warehouse at 28 Bedford Street, Belfast, and in Enniskillen Castle, and is due to open in summer 2027.

UNITE will also have an online platform allowing further access to its collections.

The organisers explained that the museum would be an "all-island, all-community" project incorporating the collections of the Inniskillings Museum, the Royal Irish Fusiliers Museum, the Royal Ulster Rifles Museum and the Royal Irish Regiment Museum, in addition to the collections and archives of the Royal Irish Regiment and the collections and archives of the North Irish Horse.

You can find out more at **tinyurl.com/royal-irish-untold.**

GETTY IMAGES

The Sound And The Fury

Alan Crosby reveals the enduring impact of the Second World War on his parents' lives

This month we commemorate the 80th anniversary of the end of the Second World War in Europe, to be followed in August by events marking the end of the war in the Far East. People of my generation were born in the aftermath of the war. Just as my parents grew up in the 1930s in the shadow of the First World War, so many of us children of the 1950s and early 1960s could not fail to be aware of the terrors and horrors and turmoil of what had taken place only a few years before we were born.

I first learnt about the war in all sorts of small ways. Into the 1960s in suburban Surrey, where I grew up, they still tested the air-raid sirens every month or so in case of a nuclear attack during the Cold War. I remember playing in the garden one summer day, when the siren sounded – an eerie shrill rising wail. My mother, who was a girl in Manchester during the war years, instinctively froze and for a few seconds (I found out much later) tried desperately to remember where the air-raid shelter was. That frightening and haunting siren sound was engraved on her memory, as it is on mine.

That frightening and haunting sound was engraved on her memory

And I remember another sound, no less frightening to me as a small child – my father, crying and shouting out in the darkness as he suffered another nightmare about his war experiences. When he was called up in 1942 he joined the Royal Marines, because his uncle Fred had been one during the First World War. Alan, his best friend from school, joined up on the same day and also went into the Marines. They were just 18, and had never been away from Derbyshire. Three years later, in the summer of 1945, Dad was on a ship heading for Singapore. He'd trained in Devon and Kent, and then gone down the Suez Canal and Red Sea on a troop carrier. I still have three letters that he wrote home to his mother in Buxton, describing the journey. The quartermaster had not done a good job – their main sustenance, in temperatures of 110°F (43°C), was tinned herrings in tomato sauce!

Then he had been in India and Ceylon (now Sri Lanka). I remember him telling me about seeing elephants swimming across the great harbour at Trincomalee. He never told me about the next phase of his wartime experience. He was involved in the liberation of Singapore from Japanese occupation in September 1945, and saw the horrific conditions, the skeletal inmates, the squalor of Changi Prison where the occupiers had housed prisoners of war.

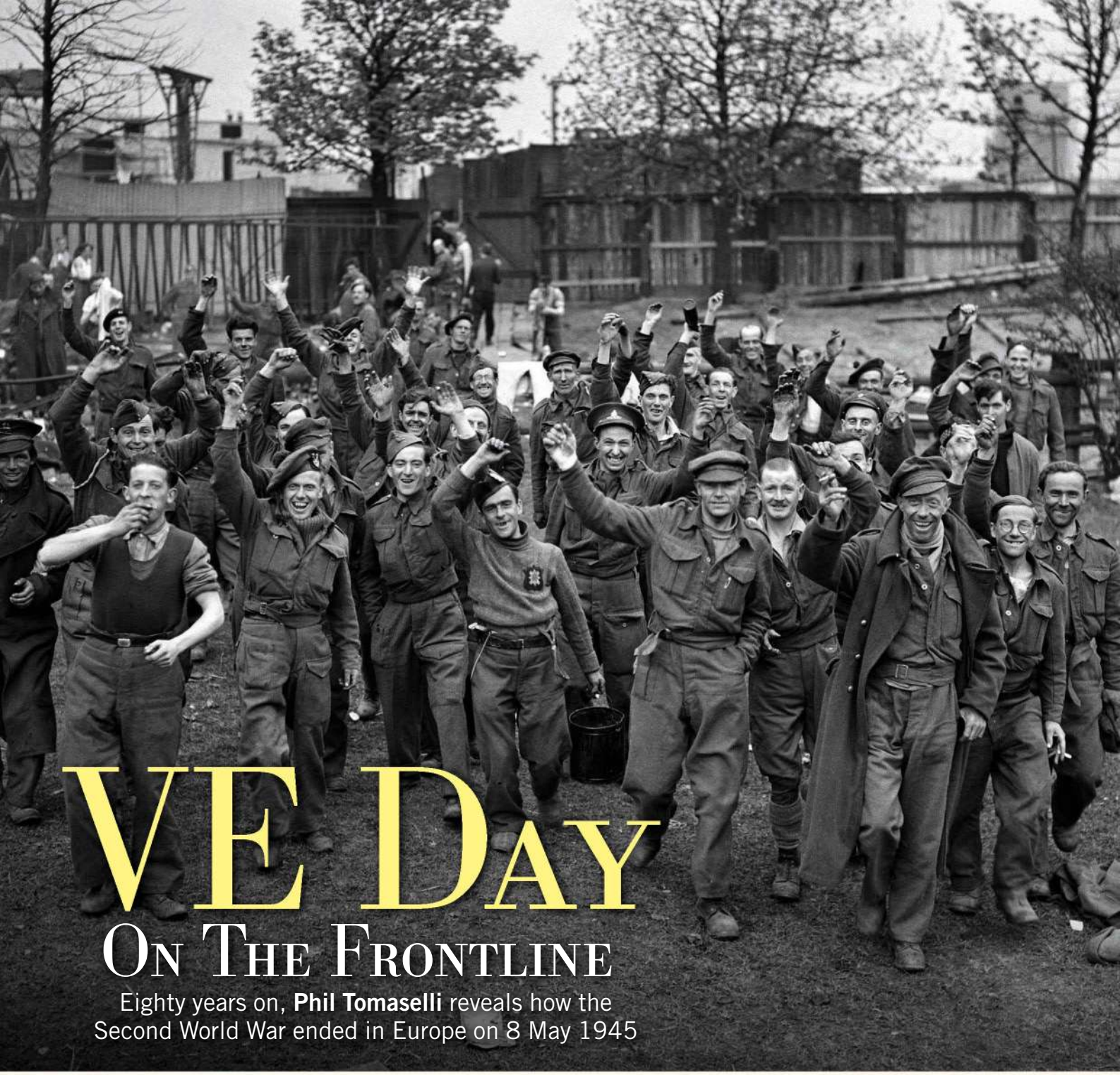
Dad came back to England in 1946, and never went 'abroad' for the rest of his life. The war satisfied any itch to travel that he may have had. He came home with an album of photographs, of the Japanese surrender and the formal ceremony that accompanied it, of buildings and landmarks, and of quite a few beautiful Singapore-Chinese girls.

The tangible results of the war years in the Far East – apart from the nightmares, and an occasional recurring bout of malaria – were the photograph album, a small collection of souvenirs (a little ebony elephant, a brass of the three wise monkeys), and an enduring love of viciously hot curries.

His story was in many ways quite unremarkable, except to those of us who were his family. Millions were killed during the war, millions more suffered far more than he did, and for yet more millions the world was turned upside down and was never the same again. Now there are so few left with us who served, their dwindling numbers and increasing frailty reminding us that before long the Second World War and the Holocaust will have passed into memory. But they must always be remembered.

ALAN CROSBY lives in Lancashire and is the editor of *The Local Historian*

ILLUSTRATION **WWW.SUEGENT.COM**



VE Day

On The Frontline

Eighty years on, **Phil Tomaselli** reveals how the Second World War ended in Europe on 8 May 1945

The First World War lasted four years and three months, but by May 1945 the Second World War had been fought for a staggering five years and eight months. Hopes rose after the breakout from Normandy in August 1944, in conjunction with the Russian advance on the Eastern Front. At home, following a parade in London, the Home Guard were stood down on 3 December 1944. By the beginning of 1945 it was becoming increasingly improbable that Germany could continue to fight.

British and US Armies crossed the Rhine, Germany's last natural defence, in March 1945 and began spreading out. By April, the Russians were surrounding Berlin and advancing towards the centre, and Hitler committed suicide on 30 April. On 4 May German forces in northern Germany surrendered unconditionally at Lüneburg Heath. Chief of staff General Alfred Jodl surrendered to General Eisenhower in Reims, north-east France, on 7 May, and Germany surrendered totally on 8 May, which was known as VE (Victory in Europe) Day.

My late father-in-law received his call-up papers on VE Day itself. Only 18½ years old, he showed his father the documents and said, "The war's over Dad, I'll be all right!" His father, who'd been on the Somme and at Passchendaele in the First World War, responded, "You, my son, are going to have to fight the Japanese…"

So the war wasn't over. It was thought that the Japanese might continue fighting for at least two more years, and an invasion of Japan itself was already being planned. Meanwhile, fighting against the Japanese continued in the Pacific and in Burma. The author of the Flashman series of novels George MacDonald Fraser, then a private, later wrote, "My parents knew I was in Burma and that… it was generally believed to

British prisoners of war liberated from Oflag 79 near Braunschweig on 12 April 1945

GETTY IMAGES

be the worst ticket you could draw in the lottery of active service. Those months [before VJ Day] must have been the longest of their lives; whatever anxieties the soldier may experience in the field can be nothing to the torment of those [families] at home."

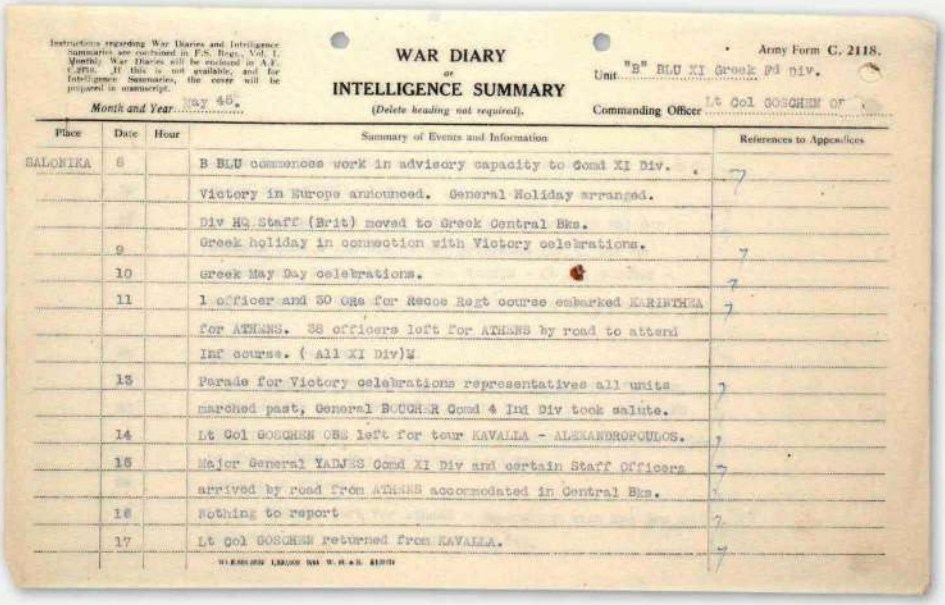
Writer, comedian and jazz musician Terence Alan 'Spike' Milligan was serving in the Royal Artillery in Italy on 1 May 1945, and heard of the early surrender of German forces there. "I walked back through the milling streets, lay on my bed and lit up a Capstan. I could hear the din outside and running footsteps, but I was strangely quiet. Suddenly a complete change of direction. How do you handle the end of a Campaign? I wanted to cry. Was it really over? 31,000 Allied troops had died – a city of the dead. Is a war ever really over?"

A few days later the news of Hitler's suicide reached them, and preparations began for VE Day. Huge amounts of alcohol appeared, Spike's jazz band were asked to play, and the Italian locals and the NAAFI (Navy, Army and Air Force Institutes) produced vast quantities of food: "a display that would have been a feast in rationed England". Much drinking and debauchery followed…

Elsewhere in Italy the War Diary of the 26th Armoured Brigade Workshop simply recorded, on 9 May, "Unit given whole day off to celebrate the victory. Church Parade held… in the morning." However, in Germany itself there was little celebration.

War Diaries

You should be able to uncover detailed information about the battles that your ancestor fought in



Instructions regarding War Diaries and Intelligence Summaries are contained in F.S. Regs., Vol. I, Month). War Diaries will be enclosed in A.F. C.2118. If this is not available, and for Intelligence Summaries, the cover will be prepared in manuscript.

WAR DIARY or INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY (Delete heading not required).

Army Form C. 2118.

Unit "B" BLU XI Greek Fd Div.

Month and Year May 45.

Commanding Officer Lt Col GOSCHEN OC

Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	References to Appendices
SALONIKA	8		B BLU commences work in advisory capacity to Comd XI Div.	
			Victory in Europe announced. General Holiday arranged.	
			Div HQ Staff (Brit) moved to Greek Central Bks.	
	9		Greek holiday in connection with Victory celebrations.	
	10		Greek May Day celebrations.	
	11		1 officer and 50 ORs for Recce Regt course embarked KARINTHEA	
			for ATHENS. 38 officers left for ATHENS by road to attend	
			Inf course. (All XI Div)	
	13		Parade for Victory celebrations representatives all units	
			marched past, General BOUCHER Comd 4 Ind Div took salute.	
	14		Lt Col GOSCHEN OBE left for tour KAVALLA - ALEXANDROPOULOS.	
	16		Major General YADJES Comd XI Div and certain Staff Officers	
			arrived by road from ATHENS accommodated in Central Bks.	
	16		Nothing to report	
	17		Lt Col GOSCHEN returned from KAVALLA.	

Using details such as unit name or number (lots of corps had units where men served in numbered detachments attached to larger formations, like the Royal Engineers), it should be possible to trace the units your relations served in and their War Diaries using The National Archives' (TNA's) online catalogue Discovery **discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk**; guidance is available at **nationalarchives.gov.uk/help-with-your-research/research-guides/british-army-operations-second-world-war/#3-unit-war-diaries**. This explains how they are organised and how to search for the correct reference(s). Don't expect to see your subject named unless they're an officer – it does happen, but rarely. During actual fighting there are likely to be maps, plans, reports, intelligence appreciations and sets of orders, with lists of officers present and a day-by-day description of where they are and what they're doing. As the peace continues details become sparser, and the last War Diaries date from June 1946.

There are plans to have these War Diaries digitised, and a few have already been added to Ancestry, but for most, a visit to TNA at Kew is necessary to view them in person. Turning up without a booking risks delay, so make sure you order documents in advance via **nationalarchives.gov.uk/about/visit-us**.

The equivalent of War Diaries in the Royal Air Force are the Operations Record Books (ORBs). Those for RAF and Commonwealth squadrons are in series AIR 27 at TNA, and can be downloaded for free via **discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/details/r/C2082**.

For Royal Navy records see the guide at **tinyurl.com/tna-guide-royal-navy-ww2**.

Protecting The POWs

The main priority for Allied forces after the German surrender was to ensure the safety of prisoners of war. It was feared that some might be deliberately killed by fanatical Nazis or panicked civilians, and others might die of neglect. Plans were suggested, but considered impractical, for landing paratroopers to seize camps or to drop weapons to POWs. In actuality, when the German front collapsed in mid-April, a semi-trained group the Special Allied Airborne Reconnaissance Force (SAARF) went into action, mainly in jeeps. Although only a small force, its presence saved many prisoners from potential violence, mainly through patient negotiation with German officers.

In other cases the guards simply walked out, and the POWs took over and waited for rescue. They were taken to holding facilities, cleaned up, fed and ordered to complete Liberation Questionnaires prior to return to Britain. More than 131,000, filled in by British and Commonwealth POWs, are on Ancestry in 'UK and Allied Countries, World War II Liberated Prisoner of War Questionnaires, 1945–1946' (**ancestry.co.uk/search/collections/62114/**). Indexed by name and number they give personal details, name, rank, number, unit and home address, and may include: date and place of capture; main camps/hospitals and work camps held in; illnesses suffered while prisoner; medical treatment received; post-capture interrogations; escape attempts; sabotage; suspected collaborators; and details of ill-treatment. They could also commend those ▶

THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES/ANCESTRY

who'd helped them. The details provided are often basic, but they're well worth looking at.

Even before the surrender, the Royal Air Force had begun flying groups of POWs from collection points on the Continent. The railways had been badly damaged, so aircraft (mainly from the now redundant Bomber Command) flew them to RAF stations in Britain. As part of Operation Exodus about 3,500 flights brought 75,000 POWs home, the remainder by railway and ship.

On return to Britain they were examined and given leave, from which they were, in most cases, given early discharge.

The Islands' Relief

The Channel Islands were occupied by the Germans, unopposed, in the first week of July 1940. Although 6,600 of Jersey's 50,000 inhabitants had already left for Britain along with 17,000 out of 42,000 from Guernsey, the others remained. The Germans created a network of tunnels, concrete bunkers and gun batteries, and the large garrison deterred any serious resistance by the population. An all-out assault would result in massive civilian casualties, so the islands remained in German hands even after almost all of France was liberated. Only the arrival of the International Red Cross relief ship the SS *Vega* at Christmas 1944 carrying more than 100,000 food parcels, soap, salt, medicines and cigarettes kept the population alive.

Contingency plans for freeing the islands had been made, and a flotilla of warships prepared. On 8 May the inhabitants broke out their concealed radios, connected them to loudspeakers and broadcast Winston Churchill's victory speech in which he announced, "Our dear Channel Islands are also to be freed today."

British warships arrived in the capital of Jersey St Helier, and the surrender documents were signed at 7.45am on 9 May. When British troops began landing the whole of St Helier, or so it seemed, turned out to cheer them ashore.

Photographer Merlyn Severn was trapped on Guernsey for the occupation. In her memoir *Double Exposure* (Faber & Faber, 1956) she revisited 9 May: "So we are free at last!… the 12,000 Germans in the island surrendered to a captain and twenty-five privates, and trooped stolidly into the barbed-wire enclosures hastily erected to contain them… The sight of those great beefy red-faced soldiers suddenly made us realise how thin and grey we all looked."

Leaving the islands remained

Air Chief Marshal William Sholto Douglas 1893–1969

Sholto played a crucial role in the Allies' victory – but paid a heavy price

Born to a respectable family, Sholto's life was shattered by his parents' acrimonious divorce and his mother's resulting poverty. He won a scholarship to the University of Oxford, but never forgot his harsh upbringing and joined the Labour Party in his teens.

Sholto learnt to fly in the First World War, and by 1938 was the assistant chief of the air staff at the Air Ministry Force. During the Second World War he led Fighter and Middle East Commands, and the air cover for the invasion of Normandy on D-Day. "I had four weeks' leave in six years," he said, but in 1945 was made commander of the British Air Forces of Occupation in Germany. Sholto was horrified by the devastation the RAF inflicted on Berlin.

In January 1946 the prime minister Clement Attlee asked Sholto to become the military governor of Germany's British Zone; he agreed reluctantly, and was later governor of the British Zone in Berlin. He signed the death warrant for a number of Nazis, conscientiously reading court proceedings and verdicts before he did so – unlike some other officers.

Not by nature a diplomat Douglas struggled, but persevered, in negotiations in the face of Russian intransigence. In later life he suffered from depression and memory loss caused by his experiences, as well as two strokes and regular nightmares. He died in 1969, a casualty of a life filled with stress that is examined in the biography *Behold the Dark Grey Man* (Biteback, 2021) written by his neuroscientist daughter Katharine Campbell.

VE Timeline

Phil explains key dates in the run-up to the end of the war – and beyond

1945

3 May

Under the headline "Resistance Ends in Berlin" *The Times* announces the Russian capture of the city, as well as Hitler's and Joseph Goebbels' suicides.

7 May

At the Supreme Headquarters of the Allied Expeditionary Force in Reims, north-east France, chief of staff General Alfred Jodl surrenders to General Eisenhower on behalf of the German Army.

8 May

At the HQ of the Soviet Military Administration in Berlin the final instrument of surrender is signed. British paratroopers land in Norway to complete liberation.

26 July

Labour wins the General Election held three weeks earlier with a substantial majority. Clement Attlee replaces Winston Churchill as prime minister, but vows to continue the war with Japan.

GETTY IMAGES

Residents of Jersey celebrate their liberation

very difficult due to shipping shortages. Severn (not a native of the islands) could only return to Britain in August because she had a medical condition that could only be treated there.

A Conquered Country

The Allies had already agreed, long before the German surrender, that Germany was to be divided into four military zones. After surrender the British took the northern zone, the Russians the eastern, the Americans the southern and the French the western. These roughly approximated the locations of their armies on VE Day.

In the British Zone there were well over 200 'military government detachments' as well as about 300 'town majors' who replaced civilian mayors. Almost everything a German did had to be approved by these officials, although the Germans thought the British Zone the least restrictive to live in. The presence of these units necessarily required hundreds of British officers, clerks and secretaries. If you know where someone was posted, the War Diaries can be found and examined at The National Archives at Kew (**national archives.gov.uk**); most are in series WO 171 (**discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/details/r/C14378**).

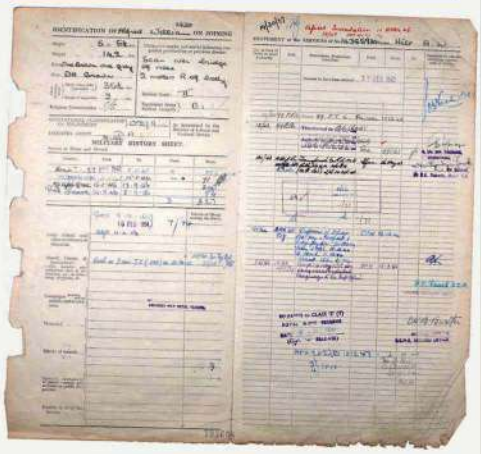
All across Germany, German soldiers who'd managed to escape the Soviet Army marched (or, rather, stumbled) westwards, desperate to be captured by the western Allies who would treat them more humanely. This began even before the formal surrender. Mark Hodkinson's book *Opening the Gates of Hell* (Cassell, 2024) includes a quotation from Lance Corporal Herbert Kenny, a dispatch rider in 35 Company, Royal Army Service, about an incident on 3 May or thereabouts: "We carried on and found [the city of] Lübeck, just off the autobahn. We took over a large petrol station. Second day there, we saw a long column marching along the highway. We set ourselves up and waited. They were German soldiers giving themselves up, surrendering to us. There were 200 of them, not a single gun between them. They had dumped them somewhere… We knew then ▶

Service Records

Phil explains how you can research your forebears' wartime experiences in Britain's armed forces

The Ministry of Defence (MOD) has begun the long process of transferring personal records of service personnel, up to about 1962, to The National Archives at Kew, which will then have them digitised by Ancestry. Army records are first in line and those from some small units have already been digitised; see 'UK, Selected Smaller Units Service Records, 1921–1959' at **ancestry.co.uk/search/collections/62683** and 'UK, Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers Service Records, 1942–1959' at **ancestry.co.uk/search/collections/62682**.

If the person you are looking for is not available in either of these collections then it's best to make the application direct to the MOD. Visit **www.gov.uk/get-copy-military-records-of-service/apply-for-the-records-of-a-deceased-serviceperson** then scroll down and click the green button 'Start now', which will offer you options depending on whether they served in the Royal Navy/Marines, Army, Royal Air Force or Home Guard. Select the service and you'll be directed to the correct form. The subject's first and last name and year of birth are required;



other details (full date of birth is most useful or service number) will help. Unless they were born before 1910 or died while serving, a death certificate is a necessity. You'll be required to provide your own details so that information can be sent to you. If the subject is still alive, the written authority is required to receive it. Note that there is likely to be a delay, probably about a year, before the record is sent.

2 August
The Potsdam Conference between Attlee, Harry S Truman and Joseph Stalin that began on 17 July concludes, and sees Germany divided into occupied zones.

6 August
The USA drops the first atomic bomb on Hiroshima *(pictured)*. Russia declares war against Japan two days later, and the following day the USA drops an atomic bomb on Nagasaki.

15 August
Emperor Hirohito announces by radio the complete surrender of all Japanese forces, despite fierce opposition from army commanders. Government officials sign the formal instrument of surrender on 2 September.

20 November
The Nuremberg Trials begin. Before they conclude on 1 October 1946 24 prominent Nazis are tried for war crimes, with 10 being hanged. Herman Göring escapes execution by committing suicide.

1954

4 July
Rationing introduced in September 1939 finishes in full when restrictions on buying and selling meat and bacon end at midnight. Many celebrate by burning their ration books.

GETTY IMAGES/THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES/ANCESTRY

German POWs walk through Berlin

▶ that the war was almost at an end, but we had to go on."

By 17 May it was estimated that over eight million Germans were POWs in the west. If the Russians knew how many prisoners they had, they weren't saying.

The problem was, what to do with these prisoners? Germany's cities had been devastated; Hamburg alone, the subject of many air raids, had suffered more damage than Britain had received in total. Allied air forces had dropped 75,000 tons of explosives on Berlin. Before the surrender the British had been sending POWs to camps in Britain, but now they were to be held in Europe.

In the late summer/early autumn of 1945 the British sent half-a-million German POWs into the fields of Germany attempting to harvest what crops there were, while others worked in the Ruhr coal mines to supply much-needed fuel. More than 100,000 POWs held in the USA on Britain's behalf were sent back to Britain and held there, used as forced labour – the last were released in late 1948. Some 24,000 elected to stay.

Hundreds of thousands of refugees – 'Displaced Persons' – were loose across Germany, and more were trying to escape from Russian-occupied territory. Many were exhausted from slave labour; many more were sick. Separated as best they could be by nationality, they were placed in camps where they were fed, medically checked and processed by the Allies. In October 1945 they were handed over to the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA), an agency that had been founded in November 1943.

Demobilisation Delight

The system for release from the British Army in 1945 was based on age and length of service. Men were allocated a 'group number', a process that began before VE Day, and over the next year or so each group number came up in turn and the members of that group were discharged. The lower the number, the better. Young men had high numbers, while old soldiers who'd been due to retire were lowest.

A similar system, 'Python', applied to leave. Many servicemen and women abroad hadn't been home for years. Shortage of shipping was a problem, but as many men as could be managed were allowed home leave, then expected to return to their unit.

Meanwhile, in Burma and the Far East, the war looked likely to continue for months. Although British troops had liberated Rangoon by early May, the monsoon struck delaying any further advance into Malaya.

Japan finally signed the official instrument of surrender on Sunday 2 September.

PHIL TOMASELLI is a military family history expert and author

Resources

Take your research further

BOOKS

In the Ruins of the Reich
Douglas Botting
HarperCollins, 1985
Botting relates, in detail, the early years of occupied Germany.

Opening the Gates of Hell
Mark Hodkinson
Cassell, 2024
Hodkinson describes the desperate situation in Germany in early 1945.

The German Occupation of the Channel Islands
Charles Cruickshank
Guernsey Press Co. Ltd, 1975
This title can be freely borrowed from the Internet Archive via **tinyurl.com/arch-germ-chan**.

WEBSITES

AIR GUNNER BOB GILL DFM
w **tinyurl.com/air-gunner-bob-repat**
This page reveals the experiences of a member of Bomber Command during Operation Exodus.

IWM COLLECTIONS
w **iwm.org.uk/collections**
Many of the Imperial War Museums' photos, books and reminiscences regarding the occupation of Austria and Germany have been digitised.

MILITARY HISTORY ONLINE
w **militaryhistoryonline.com/WWII/SAARF**
Find out more about the work of the units sent to make contact with the POWs and German authorities.

NATIONAL ARMY MUSEUM
w **tinyurl.com/nam-occ-germ**
Learn about the role that the British Army played in occupied Germany.

THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES
w **tinyurl.com/tna-guides-ww2**
TNA's website includes 51 research guides on the Second World War, with in-depth information and hints.

WW2 PEOPLE'S WAR
w **tinyurl.com/bbc-peoples-war-end**
This BBC website contains many memories of VE Day and other aspects of the Second World War.

GETTY IMAGES

© Military Images / Alamy Stock Photo

The Year Was 1945…

Honour the past at the National Memorial Arboretum as it marks 80 years since the end of the Second World War

On 8 May 1945 Winston Churchill announced the end of the war in Europe with the words, 'My dear friends, this is your hour'. Throughout this year, across the UK, Europe and beyond, millions of people will mark this momentous occasion, just as they did in 1945.

In 2025, the National Memorial Arboretum will reflect and remember the significant events that brought about the end of the Second World War, marking the anniversaries of both VE and VJ Day.

Celebrate, reflect and remember at the National Memorial Arboretum

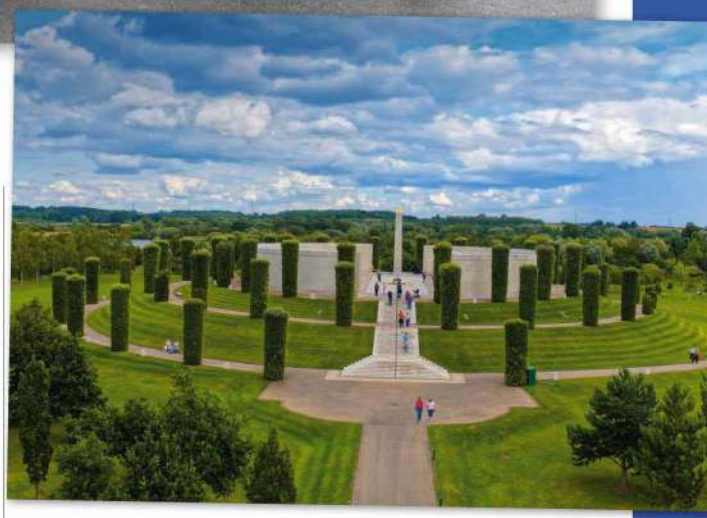
The Arboretum is the UK's year-round centre of remembrance. Located in Staffordshire it encompasses 150-acres of woodland and gardens, and over 400 memorials, including the Armed Forces Memorial dedicated in the presence of Queen Elizabeth II in 2007.

'The Year Was 1945…', will open with a jubilant weekend of VE Day celebrations between 3 May and 5 May. Inspired by the street party spirit of 1945, the free event will feature costumed actors, live performances and activities for all ages.

'The Year Was 1945…' will continue at the Arboretum until 16 November. Commemorative services will be held to honour the service and sacrifice of those who fought in the Second World War, acknowledging both the jubilation of victory and the solemn Remembrance of those who never returned. Four new temporary exhibitions featuring letters, photographs and artefacts will explore the real-life experiences of those who lived through 1945. Expert guest speaker talks, trails and themed guided walks, led by the Arboretum's knowledgeable volunteers, will bring the era to life and give a voice to the stories of those who lived during that monumental year.

A very personal history

The Arboretum was created to remember those who have served and sacrificed on behalf of the nation. There are memorials dedicated to the armed forces, emergency services and civilian organisations, such as the Women's Land Army and Women's Timber Corps, Bevin Boys and Civil Defence Service.



Other memorials honour the resilience shown in countries far away from home. Each memorial is special. Will you find part of your family history here?

Visitors are welcome to the Arboretum 364 days a year and it's free to visit (charges apply for parking and tours). While this year's commemorative activities will open a window in time to 1945, the Arboretum is always an inspiring place.

Join the celebrations and relive the street party spirit of VE Day (top); honour the service and sacrifice of those who fought in the Second World War at the National Memorial Arboretum (above).

NATIONAL MEMORIAL ARBORETUM

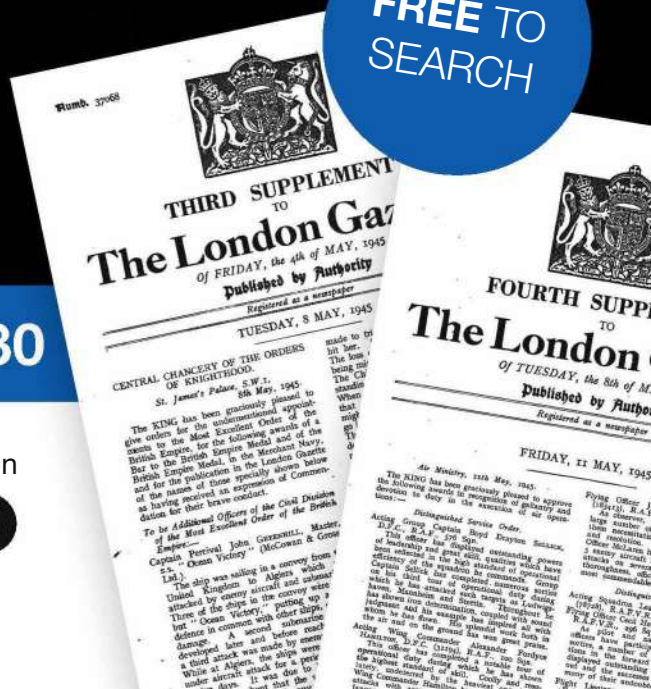
For more information on visiting the Arboretum and 'The Year Was 1945…' visit **thenma.org.uk/1945**

THE GAZETTE
OFFICIAL PUBLIC RECORD

VE DAY 80TH ANNIVERSARY 1945 - 2025

FIND YOUR WORLD WAR II HERO

- ✓ **Official WWII despatches**
- ✓ **Awards for gallantry**
- ✓ **War medals**
- ✓ **Military promotions**



FREE TO SEARCH

www.thegazette.co.uk/veday80

The Gazette is the UK's official public record dating back to 1665 and holds millions of notices which can help you learn more about your ancestors.

The Gazette is on

8 REASONS WHY YOU WOULDN'T SURVIVE THE 17TH CENTURY

The old St Paul's Cathedral burns during the Great Fire of London in 1666

It's a miracle that any of our forebears in the 1600s lived to see the 18th century considering the multitude of threats that they had to overcome, says historian and author **Janet Few**

All of our 17th-century direct ancestors survived to create the next generation, but life in the 1600s was beset with hazards. Just how easy was it to survive? Imagine you were born back then. First of course, in order to become an ancestor, you have to reach adulthood. One in five infants will not survive until their first birthday. Then there are the perils of childhood, with accidents and illness, meaning that no more than 70 per cent of newborns will attain the age of 16.

Moreover, if you are a married woman, producing the next generation is another hazard. Each time you give birth you stand a 1.5 per cent chance of dying – and you are likely to give birth seven or eight times.

STARVATION

Will you get enough to eat? You need 5,000–6,000 calories a day just to maintain your bodyweight because you lead an active lifestyle, and 80 per cent of those calories will come from grain in the form of bread, beer or porridge. Make sure that you store your grain carefully, so the rats don't get in, or it doesn't go mouldy. Growing seasons are short, and the transportation and storage of food is a problem. Europe is in the grips of a mini ice age and you are at the mercy of the weather, particularly if you are among the 80 per cent of the population who are dependent on the land. Crops can be ruined, harvests can fail. There will only be one good harvest in the 1630s, and the years 1646–1650 will bring five bad harvests in succession. Even a small-scale harvest failure in one tiny geographical area can be catastrophic. If you are lucky enough to have enough to eat, ▶

JANET FEW teaches a Pharos Tutors course about researching your relations' health and death (**pharos tutors.com**)

GETTY IMAGES

you will be cooking on an open fire. Take care that your clothing doesn't catch alight, or that sparks don't ignite your thatched roof.

LAWBREAKING

Don't even think about stealing food, because punishments are severe. Although this will get worse in later centuries, many crimes already attract the death penalty. About 72,000 people were put to death during Henry VIII's reign, and it hasn't got much better under the Stuarts. Begging isn't a good idea either, as you will be whipped through the streets – and repeat offences are punishable by death.

BEING RICH

Maybe you are wealthy. That's fine – you won't starve – but you will be consuming plenty of rich food and good wine. The barber surgeon will bleed you often to rebalance your humours; you just have to hope that he doesn't cut too deep. If you suffer from gout, the cure might be to mix the leaves and berries of cuckoo-pint (also known as lords-and-ladies) with hot ox dung and apply liberally. If you are rich, you are lucky enough to be able to afford a full set of pewter to eat and drink from, including dishes, plates and cups – although it is a pity that the alloy historically has a high lead content. You will also need to keep up appearances. Starting with the more benign procedures, sage will prevent your hair from going grey. You can clean your teeth with tooth soap, made from lavender, ground rats' skulls and urine. You can treat your eyes with deadly nightshade (belladonna), so that they are shiny and alluring. Your skin needs to be fashionably pale – a liberal application of white lead is required here. However, using too much deadly nightshade or white lead will not end well. Being wealthy may lead to health problems that will shorten your life but most of you will probably survive, at least for a while.

A cart carries a condemned man to Tyburn Gallows in London during the 17th century

SEEING A DOCTOR

You can visit the barber surgeon even if you're not rich, who will perform amputations, trepanations, provide you with an enema or extract bad teeth for a fee. However, the healthcare provided is more likely to harm you than heal you. Thirty per cent of patients will die on the operating table, and many who survive will only die later, when infection sets in.

Urban Living

Janet explains the particular risks associated with life in a town or city during the 17th century

If rural life doesn't suit, you could consider moving to a town. Here there are many hazards that you need to avoid. Don't fall into a tanpit full of urine for tanning leather, or get run down by a cart. That is of course if you survive the journey. Travel is likely to have been on foot, or on horseback. You might fall off your horse, or be set upon by robbers.

With houses crowded together, fire is more of a hazard in towns. We all know about the Great Fire of London in 1666, but most cities experience serious fires in the 17th century including Glasgow in 1652 (a third of the city was destroyed), Marlborough in 1653, Northampton in 1675 and Warwick in 1694.

Sanitary conditions will also be much worse here, and epidemics are more likely to spread. You might get typhus, caused by the bite of the body louse, and if you do you will probably die. That's only the start of it when it comes to disease – smallpox alone is likely to kill at least 10 per cent of the country's population. You are aware of the theory of miasmas – the 'bad air' that makes you ill. So you won't want to expose your skin, which means that washing isn't a good idea. Plague, especially dangerous in towns and cities, will revisit roughly once every generation until the 1660s, and is likely to be fatal. A quarter of Londoners will die from the plague in 1665 but there are serious outbreaks in other years, notably 1603 and 1625 and in towns across the country.

A map of Bath in the 17th century

GETTY IMAGES

Woodcut showing the hanging of a witch in England

ACCUSATIONS OF WITCHCRAFT

Herbal cures are less invasive, so the risk of death is much lower. But if you are the little old lady on the edge of the village with a herb garden who is dispensing these remedies, do keep an eye out for the witchfinder. About 500 people, mostly women, will be hanged as witches in England and Wales in the 1600s. Take particular care if you live in East Anglia, where persecutions are at their highest. The 17th century is a time of religious turmoil in general. Make sure that you are on the right side. This means that you need to know what the 'right side' currently is. Non-attendance at church will lead to a fine. Heresy is punishable by death.

WORK

In times before health and safety, the world of work is a dangerous place. Bad luck if you are a fisherman or sailor. You will be at the mercy of the wind and waves, and navigational techniques are only just beginning to improve. If you escape scurvy, all those hardtack biscuits and very little to drink means you will probably suffer from the noxious wind of the belly, the type when the gut solidifies. Fear not, the barber surgeon has a cure: white wine and honey. You aren't going to drink it, however – it must be administered as an enema.

If someone is constructing an impressive building near you, it's good news if you are a mason or a carpenter, until you are crushed by falling stone, or fall from a great height. Perhaps you are a blacksmith and a careless apprentice has dropped an anvil on your foot; shame that infection has set in. If you work on the land instead, mind yourself with that billhook or scythe, and beware of the mad bull.

It isn't much better for the women among you. You might be scalded as you take boiling water from the fire, or cut yourself when you're preparing food.

Cavaliers surrender to Roundheads during the English Civil War, c1648

GETTY IMAGES

ENGLISH CIVIL WAR

Finally there's the threat of battle wounds if you head off to the wars, or get into a skirmish, especially if your equipment doesn't measure up. Some 200,000 will die as a result of the English Civil War, either directly in battle, or from starvation as troops destroy crops. Even if you manage to survive the war, congratulations – but if you indulged in the services of the camp followers then you may have caught syphilis, which you might pass on to your wife. It is going to take you a while to die, but it will get you in the end.

RESOURCES

Take your research further

BOOKS

1666: Plague, War and Hellfire
Rebecca Rideal
John Murray, 2017
Find out more about a particularly dangerous year in British history, including the Second Anglo-Dutch War.

Coffers, Clysters, Comfrey and Coifs
Janet Few
Family History Partnership, 2012
Janet's guide explores the lives of our 17th-century ancestors.

The Time Traveller's Guide to Restoration Britain
Ian Mortimer
Vintage, 2018
This bestseller reveals what daily life was like during the 1600s, including what people ate and how they dressed.

WEBSITES

HISTORY EXTRA
w **tinyurl.com/history-extra-stuart-ordinary**
The official website of *BBC History Magazine* includes a fascinating article by Andrea Zuvich about life in Stuart Britain for ordinary people. Note that free registration is required.

MONGENES
w **mongenes.org.uk/epidemics_in_bri.html**
"The friendly family history website for the County of Monmouthshire, Wales" includes this timeline of epidemics in Britain.

WITCH TRIALS
w **witchtrials.co.uk/trials.html**
Here you can read details of more than 500 witch trials that were held in England.

Meet The Celebrities

Rosemary Collins celebrates the imminent return of *Who Do You Think You Are?* to BBC One and iPlayer as eight celebrities uncover their roots

Family history fans can rejoice as the BBC has announced who will be appearing in series 22 of *Who Do You Think You Are?*.

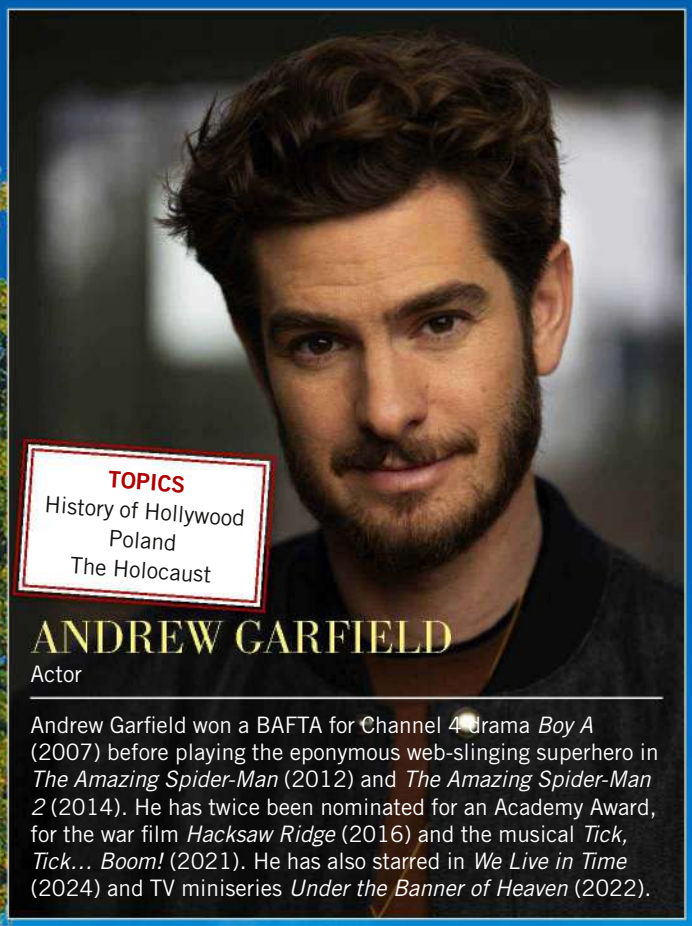
This year's line-up features eight celebrities including BAFTA-winning actor and erstwhile Spider-Man Andrew Garfield, Irish actor and comedian Aisling Bea, and actor and singer Will Young.

The series is due to be broadcast on BBC One in spring 2025.

Simon Young, BBC head of history, commented, "The stellar line-up this year is a real treat for our audiences. But so is the history, from the shock of a royal ancestor to epic stories of survival. And that's why this series endures, because it hints at the amazing family micro histories that make all of us who we are."

Colette Flight, executive producer for Wall to Wall Media, said, "Spanning centuries and travelling the globe, *Who Do You Think You Are?* is back, with eight much-loved celebrities to entertain and captivate us as they delve into their family histories.

"As they discover their ancestors' adventures, triumphs, trials and tribulations, their rich family stories reveal incredible snapshots of history, including one of the greatest villains of medieval England, the evacuation at Dunkirk, rescuing art looted by the Nazis, and the birth of American Independence."

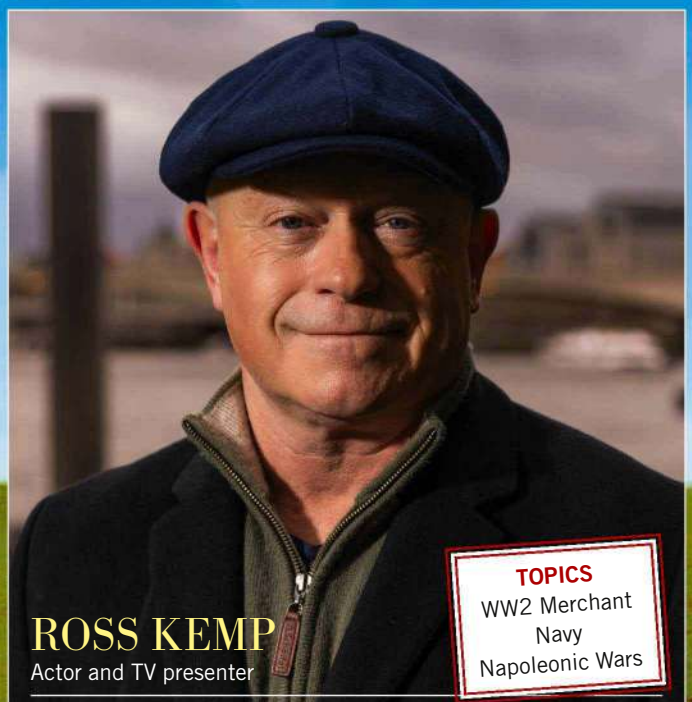


TOPICS
History of Hollywood
Poland
The Holocaust

ANDREW GARFIELD

Actor

Andrew Garfield won a BAFTA for Channel 4 drama *Boy A* (2007) before playing the eponymous web-slinging superhero in *The Amazing Spider-Man* (2012) and *The Amazing Spider-Man 2* (2014). He has twice been nominated for an Academy Award, for the war film *Hacksaw Ridge* (2016) and the musical *Tick, Tick… Boom!* (2021). He has also starred in *We Live in Time* (2024) and TV miniseries *Under the Banner of Heaven* (2022).



TOPICS
WW2 Merchant Navy
Napoleonic Wars

ROSS KEMP

Actor and TV presenter

Ross Kemp is famous to millions of *EastEnders* fans as hard-man Grant Mitchell. He started playing the role in 1990, and most recently returned this year for the show's 40th anniversary. He has also made a series of Sky documentaries, including *Ross Kemp on Gangs* (2004–2009), which won a BAFTA, and *Ross Kemp in Afghanistan* (2008–2012), and since 2022 has presented the BBC One quiz show *Bridge of Lies*.

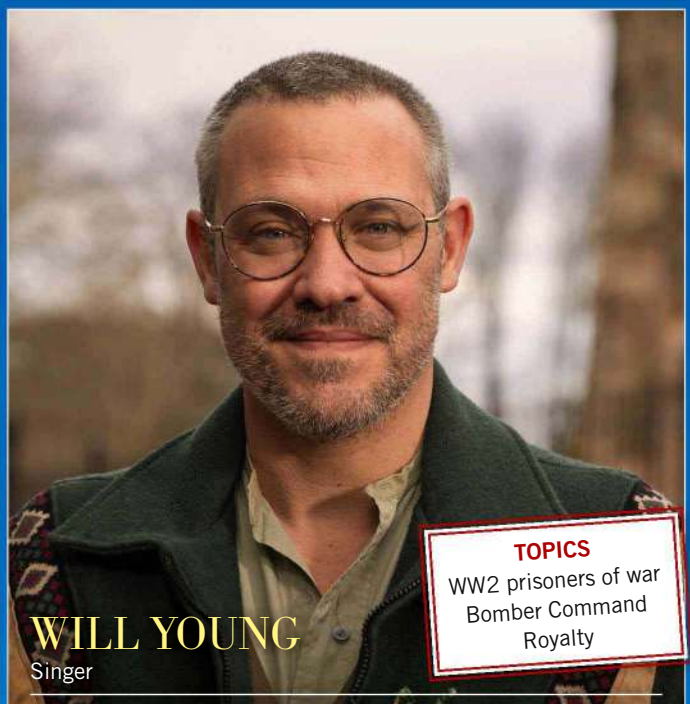
GETTY IMAGES BBC/WALL TO WALL/STEPHEN PERRY

AISLING BEA

Actor and comedian

Aisling Bea wrote and starred in the Channel 4 series *This Way Up* (2019–2021), about a woman recovering from a nervous breakdown. Her many other TV appearances include Netflix comedy-drama *Living With Yourself* (2019) and a 2022 episode of *Doctor Who*, while she starred in series 5 of *Taskmaster* in 2017.

TOPICS
Female forebears
Famine in Ireland
Irish independence



WILL YOUNG

Singer

Will Young won the first series of *Pop Idol* in 2002, and followed it up by releasing the chart-topping double A-sided single *Anything Is Possible/Evergreen*. He has recorded four number-one albums and multiple number-one songs, and sold over eight million albums worldwide. He has undertaken multiple concert tours, acted in film, theatre and TV, and published books about mental health and life as a gay man.

TOPICS
WW2 prisoners of war
Bomber Command
Royalty

DIANE MORGAN

Actor and comedian

Diane Morgan first played the clueless TV interviewer Philomena Cunk on *Charlie Brooker's Weekly Wipe* in 2013. She has since appeared in spin-offs including *Cunk on Britain* (2018), the BAFTA-nominated *Cunk on Earth* (2022), and *Cunk on Life* (2024). She has also appeared in *Motherland* (2016–2022), and created, writes and stars in *Mandy* (2019 onwards).

TOPICS
First World War
Illegitimacy
Scottish ancestry

MISHAL HUSAIN

Journalist and broadcaster

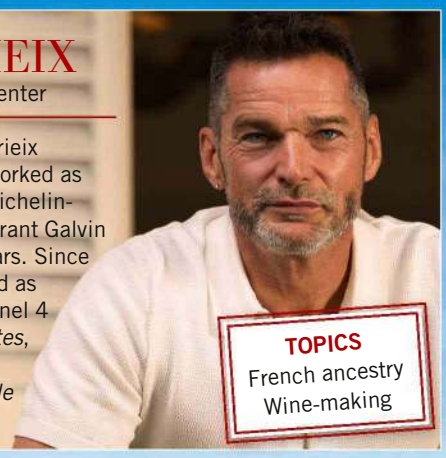
Mishal Husain first joined the BBC in 1998. She presented the news and *Newsnight*, and joined the *Today* programme in 2013. She was named the Broadcaster of the Year in 2015, and chaired two televised electoral debates in the run-up to the 2024 general election. At the beginning of 2025 she left the corporation to join Bloomberg News. She has also written *Broken Threads* (4th Estate, 2024), a bestselling memoir of her family history following Indian independence.

TOPICS
Indian ancestry
American roots

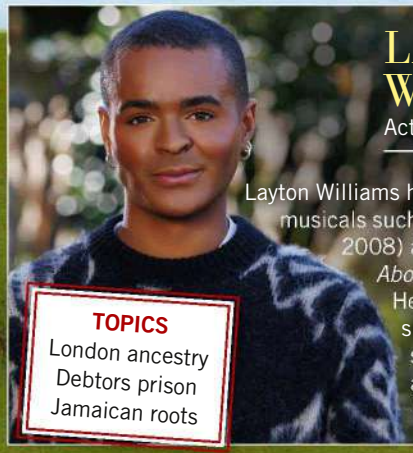
FRED SIRIEIX

Maître d' and TV presenter

Limoges-born Fred Sirieix trained in Paris and worked as general manager of Michelin-starred London restaurant Galvin at Windows for 14 years. Since 2013 he has appeared as the maître d' on Channel 4 dating series *First Dates*, and in 2019 began presenting *Remarkable Places to Eat*.



TOPICS
French ancestry
Wine-making



LAYTON WILLIAMS

Actor, singer and dancer

Layton Williams has starred in stage musicals such as *Billy Elliot* (2007–2008) and *Everybody's Talking About Jamie* (2019–2022). He has acted in BBC Three sitcom *Bad Education* since 2012, and was a runner-up on *Strictly Come Dancing* in 2023.

TOPICS
London ancestry
Debtors prison
Jamaican roots

GETTY IMAGES BBC/WALL TO WALL/STEPHEN PERRY

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WHO DO YOU THINK YOU ARE?

'My Tree Includes A Journalist, A Bigamist And A Bandmaster'

CELEBRATING YOUR DISCOVERIES

When Jeff Guyett decided to look into the origins of his unusual surname, he uncovered several relations who had fascinating lives, says **Claire Vaughan**

Anyone with a surname as unusual as Jeff Guyett's is bound to be curious about where it came from. Although this was one of the driving forces behind his foray into genealogy, it turned out that it wasn't the most interesting thing about his family. He was astounded to discover stories of bigamy and suicide, a journalist with royal connections, and a musical military man with rather mysterious origins.

Jeff's interest in family history was also piqued by his paternal grandmother Vera (née Oakley). "She'd always said that the Oakleys were special." Back in the 1980s, Jeff had spoken to his grandparents to find out why. "I took down some details, but had to stop because my grandmother started getting upset."

Jeff, who lives in Uffculme in Devon, started looking into his tree in earnest during the first Covid-19 lockdown in 2020, by which time both his paternal grandparents were long dead. "Vera passed away in 1991, and my grandfather died eight years later. My father found his memoir while cleaning out his house."

My father found my grandfather's memoir while cleaning out his house

George William Guyett, the son of Jesse Sydney Guyett and Annie (née Bird), was born in 1908 and grew up in Hounslow, West London. In his early years, life was simple. He wrote about school, and his family. "Mother was strict, very strict. Clean shoes always, well-brushed hair, Eton white collars, and a suit I hated! Knickerbocker trousers buttoned just below the knees with a long belted jacket."

George had left something out of his account though. "I learnt that he'd had a brother, who was born two years after he was, but had died a year later. He may not have remembered."

The memoir ends around the time Jesse died in 1921. A platelayer (track inspector) on the railways, Jesse survived being struck by a train in 1915. When he was discharged from hospital, one leg was one-and-a-half inches shorter than the other.

This family photo includes Vera Oakley *(front row, third from left)* seated between her parents Francis/Frank and Mary

UNP/THEO MOYE

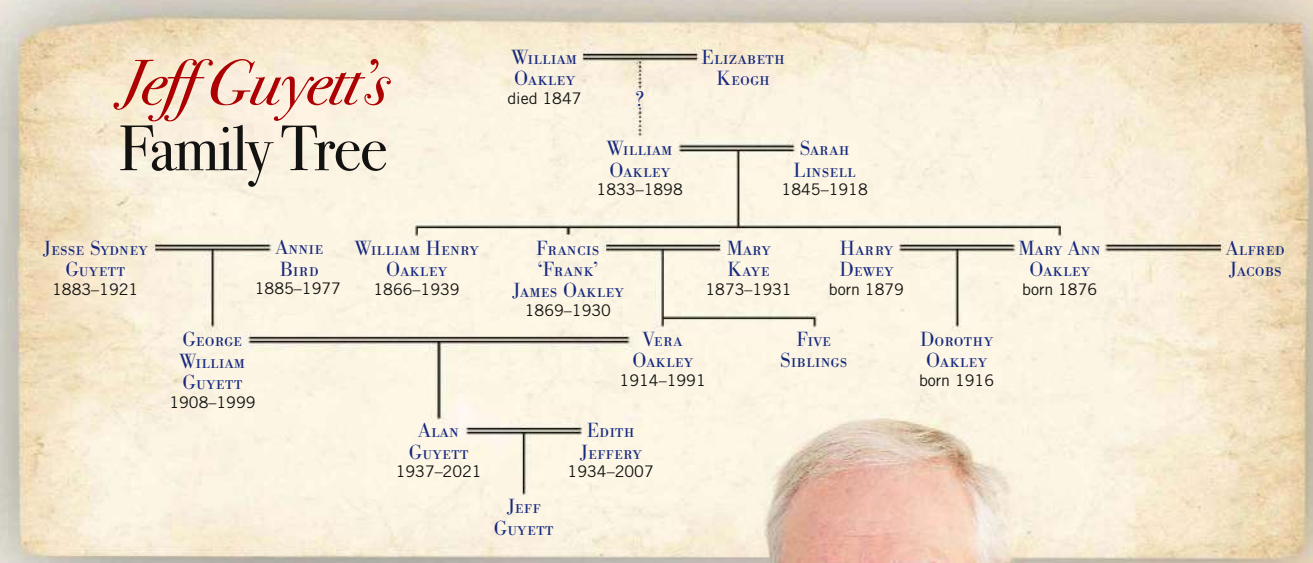
Fatal March

"He couldn't walk very far, but they enlisted him during the First World War and made him do a forced march of 20 miles one day. He never recovered."

Jeff turned his attention to his grandmother Vera, and her parents Francis James Oakley (1869–1930) and Mary Kaye (1873–1931). "My great grandfather Francis, known as Frank, was an entrepreneur and owned several tobacco shops in the Hounslow area. He was also an estate agent."

Jeff uncovered a shocking article published in the *West Hartlepool Northern Daily*

Jeff Guyett's Family Tree



Jeff with his books, records and family photos, including one of Vera in her late teens/early 20s

Jeff's research material includes *(front left)* his grandfather's memoir, and William Henry Oakley's book *Guildford in the Great War*

Mail on 18 March 1930: "Mr Francis James Oakley (59), an estate agent, was found dead in his office at High Street, Hampton Wick, yesterday. He was last seen on Sunday morning. A police constable forced his way into the office in consequence of complaints of escaping gas."

Jeff found a report of the inquest in another paper. "They couldn't understand why he'd committed suicide. He'd seemed happy on the Saturday night.

"My grandmother was only 15 when he died. I didn't know anything about it, and blundered straight in when I asked her questions all those years ago."

One of Frank's brothers, William Henry Oakley (1866–1939), had been the editor and proprietor of the *Surrey Advertiser* for over 30 years.

"His obituary said that in 1894 he'd reported to the world the birth of the future king Edward VIII." William Henry had been asked to the royal residence White Lodge in Richmond Park, where the Duchess of York gave birth. "He was also invited to the christening, so he might have been in the presence of Edward's great grandmother Queen Victoria."

A resident of Guildford, William Henry wrote a book about the town's role in the First World War. It's a poignant read, especially when you consider that he lost one of his sons at the Battle of the Somme.

In 1915, their younger sister Mary Ann (born 1876) married Harry Dewey, a lieutenant corporal in the Cycle Corps.

Mary Ann Oakley and *(inset)* the record of her second marriage

Marital Mystery

"Harry Dewey's First World War records survive, and are fascinating. On his attestation documents, he put his next of kin as his wife, who was living in Manchester, but he requested all his possessions to go to his 'friend' Mary Ann Oakley if he died. What's more, the 1915 marriage record says he was a bachelor, and his first wife was still alive in the 1921 census."

Harry didn't die in the war, but he didn't return to Mary Ann and she never found out what happened to him. Eventually she married again. "On the wedding certificate she was recorded as Mary Ann Oakley, 'otherwise known as Dewey', rather than 'formerly Dewey', and Dorothy – her daughter with Harry – used her mother's maiden name."

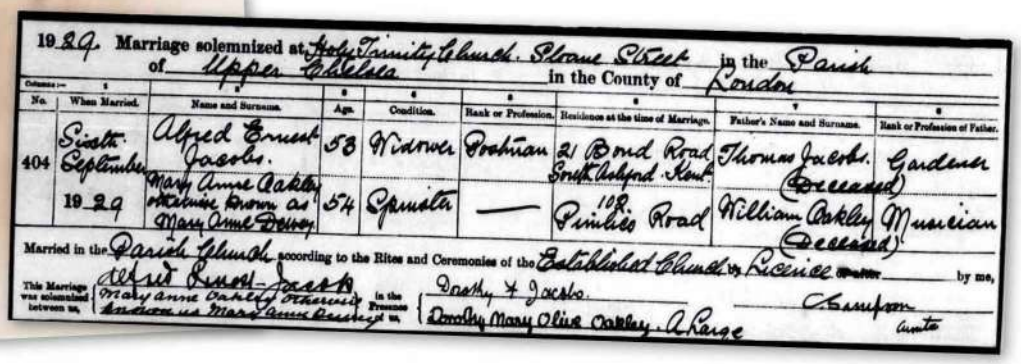
These details add credence to the bigamy idea.

Jeff has been unable to uncover Harry's fate. "He could have gone to jail, or there's a theory that he died in the 1930s. I haven't found any proof yet, but I'm looking."

But was it the father of these three siblings, William, who Vera was referring to when she said that the Oakleys were special?

On Mary Ann's marriage certificates, William was recorded as a musician and bandmaster, while William Henry's baptism record reveals that he was a bandmaster in the 70th (Surrey) Regiment of Foot.

Jeff headed to The National Archives at Kew (TNA; **nationalarchives.gov.uk**), and consulted the muster rolls to see if he could trace his great great grandfather's military career. These records suggested that William was born in the city of Cork, Ireland, in 1833. He joined the Army in 1847, aged 14, serving with the regiment as a boy soldier. The


1929. Marriage solemnized at Holy Trinity Church, Sloane Street in the Parish of Upper Chelsea in the County of London

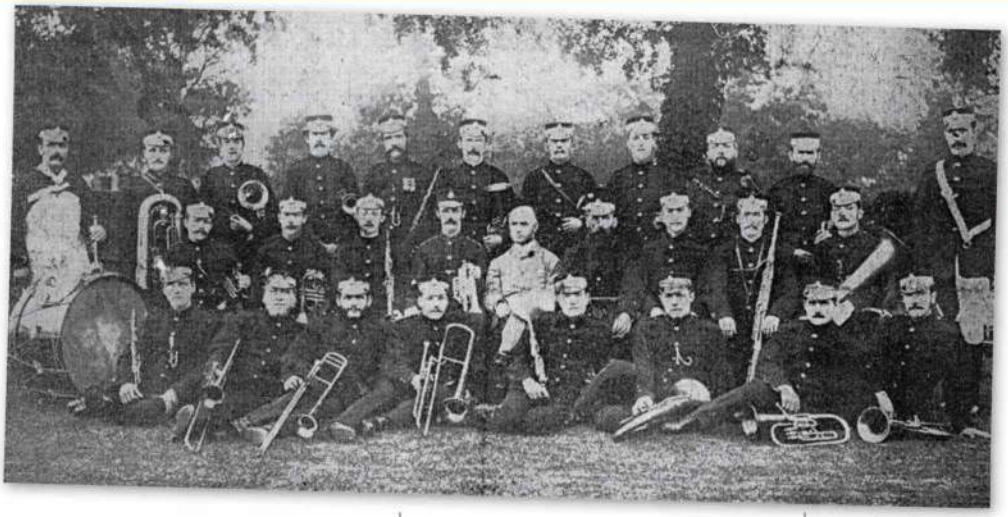
No.	When Married.	Name and Surname.	Age.	Condition.	Rank or Profession.	Residence at the time of Marriage.	Father's Name and Surname.	Rank or Profession of Father.
404	Sixth September 1929	Alfred Ernest Jacobs.	58	Widower	Postman	21 Bond Road South Ashford Kent.	Thomas Jacobs. (Deceased)	Gardener
		Mary Anne Oakley otherwise known as Mary Anne Dewey	54	Spinster	—	102 Pimlico Road	William Oakley (Deceased)	Musician

Married in the Parish Church according to the Rites and Ceremonies of the Established Church by Licence by me, Hampson Curate

This Marriage was solemnized between us, Alfred Ernest Jacobs / Mary Anne Oakley otherwise known as Mary Anne Dewey

in the Presence of us, Dorothy Y Jacobs. / Dorothy Mary Olive Oakley. A Range

UNP/THEO MOYE



This 1886 photo of the Uxbridge and Hillingdon band includes William Oakley *(back row, fifth from left)* and son Francis/Frank *(front row, first left)*

70th Foot later merged with the 31st (Huntingdonshire) Regiment of Foot to become the East Surrey Regiment, and *History of the East Surrey Regiment Vol. 1, 1702–1914* by Colonel Hugh W Pearse (Spottiswoode, Ballantyne & Co. Ltd, 1916) gave Jeff key insight.

In 1849, William left Cork with the regiment to sail the 14,000 miles to Calcutta in West Bengal. "They then made their way by river and on foot to Peshawar – that's over 1,000 miles. They were there in 1857, and helped to suppress the Indian Rebellion."

William was fortunate in that he wasn't involved in any fighting. He also dodged a cholera outbreak. "Out of just over 1,000 men, 342 officers and 344 soldiers died. I'm lucky that he survived."

He married Sarah Linsell while he was in India, the daughter of another sergeant in the 70th Foot.

In 1861, the regiment sailed to New Zealand. At some point, William learnt to play the clarinet. "By the time they got to Auckland, he was the bandmaster of the 70th Foot."

But it wasn't all about the music for William. He also fought in the New Zealand Wars (1845–1872) between the colonial government and the Māori resistance, while a newspaper report revealed that he had jumped into a lake and saved a man from drowning after a pleasure boat capsized.

In 1866, William and Sarah returned to the UK with the regiment. The birth and baptism records of their 10 children revealed their movements.

"William Henry's birth was registered in Dover, so Sarah must have been pregnant on the voyage home. My great grandfather was born in Kinsale in County Cork."

Photo Discovery

William made the rank of colour sergeant before leaving the Army. "After this, he became the bandmaster of three bands, including the Uxbridge and Hillingdon. I found a photograph of the band on a site called Internet Bandsman's Everything Within (**ibew.org.uk**). One member is wearing two medals: the Indian Mutiny Medal and the New Zealand War Medal. I thought, 'That must be William!' "

A newspaper article featuring the image confirmed it. "The caption identified him and Frank, who was in the band too."

One thing still puzzles Jeff though. William died in 1898, and his obituary states he was born in Gibraltar not Cork. The 70th Foot were in Gibraltar at the time of his birth, so perhaps his father had been in the regiment too? There's also a link with Templemore, County Tipperary, where William enlisted in 1847.

Jeff hasn't found a birth record yet, but there is a potential father: a William Oakley married an Elizabeth Keogh in Templemore, and died in 1847. This was the time of the Great Famine, so perhaps William junior saw the Army as a way out.

Oh, and in case you're wondering, Jeff has traced his Guyett name back to agricultural labourers in Andover, Hampshire, in the early 18th century. He's working on going back further – but that's another story.

UNP/THEO MOYE

TELL YOUR STORY

Share your family story with us and you could appear in the magazine!

Please write to us at the address on page 6 or email *wdytyaeditorial@ourmedia.co.uk*

Resources

These resources helped Jeff reveal his relations' lives

BOOK

History of the East Surrey Regiment Vol. 1, 1702–1914
Colonel Hugh W Pearse
Spottiswoode, Ballantyne & Co. Ltd, 1916

Histories of individual regiments can provide valuable information about your ancestor's army service. This title includes details about the history, movements and battles that the 70th Foot (later the East Surrey Regiment) were involved in, and is available for free from the Internet Archive at **tinyurl.com/arch-pearse**). Also, you can read Richard Cannon's *Historical Record of the Seventieth, or the Surrey Regiment of Foot* (Parker, Furnivall & Parker, 1849) for free via Project Gutenberg (**tinyurl.com/guten-cannon**).

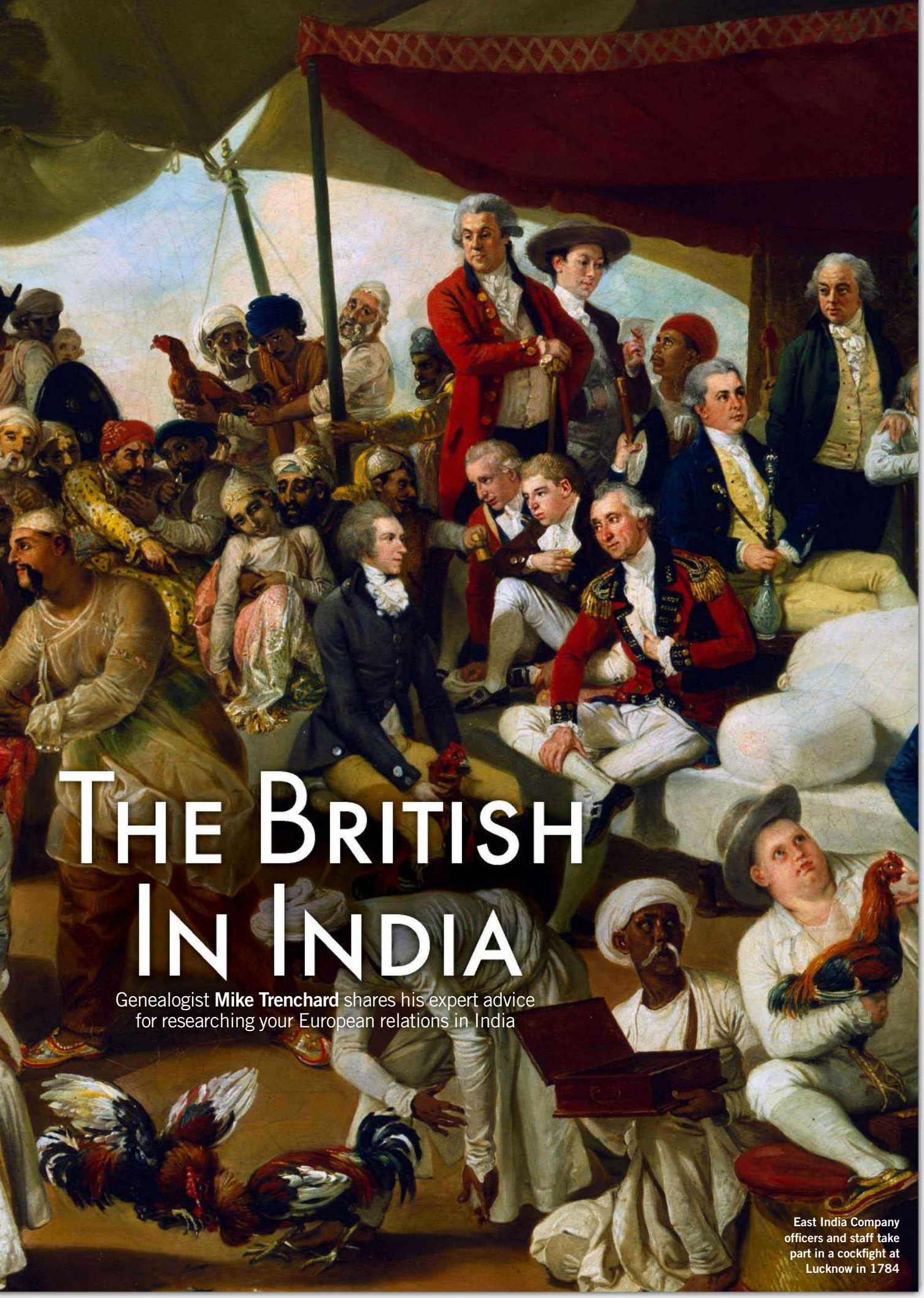
WEBSITES

BRITISH NEWSPAPER ARCHIVE
w **britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk**

You may find an obituary for your forebear in a newspaper. Some of the longer ones provide rich detail, including the names of relatives who attended the funeral. William Henry Oakley's obituary gave an insight into his life as a newspaper editor.

THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES
w **tinyurl.com/tna-guide-musters**

Muster rolls enable you to trace the movements of relations who were in the Victorian military (and earlier). Usually taken every three months, they account for everyone in a regiment from officers to boy soldiers for payment purposes. Dating from 1730–1898, a small selection are on genealogical websites; the rest must be consulted in person at TNA, and from 1868 may even give details of soldiers' wives and children. See the online research guide.

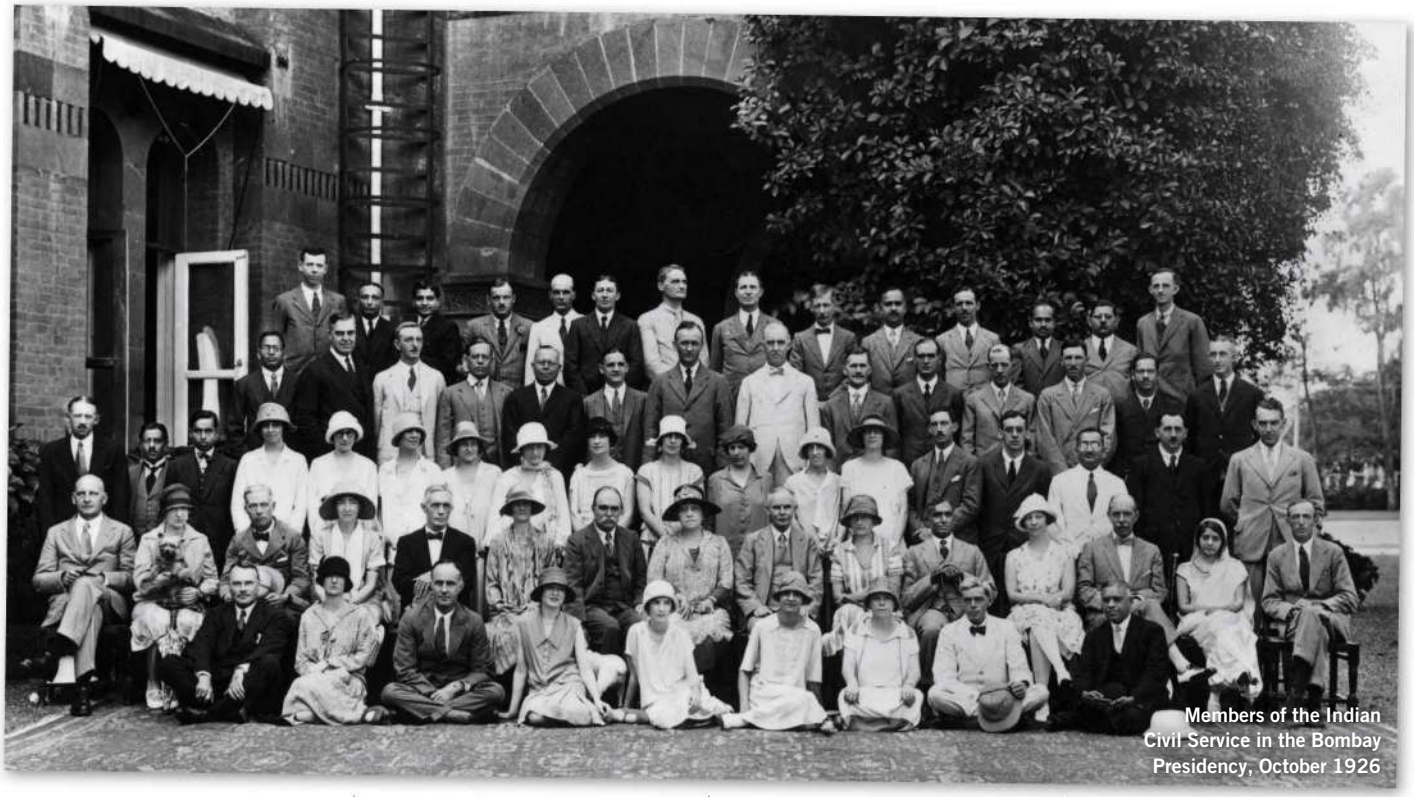


The British In India

Genealogist **Mike Trenchard** shares his expert advice for researching your European relations in India

East India Company officers and staff take part in a cockfight at Lucknow in 1784

GETTY IMAGES



Members of the Indian Civil Service in the Bombay Presidency, October 1926

Trade has always been important to Britain, and in 1600 the East India Company (EIC) was established by royal charter during the final years of the reign of Elizabeth I. Factories (settlements) were set up along the country's coast. When Charles II received Bombay (now Mumbai) as part of the dowry of his wife Catherine of Braganza in 1662, the king decided to transfer control of the city to the EIC, and it became the company's base.

In 1670 the EIC was granted powers to raise armies and rule the land it had acquired. Three main factories were formed in Bombay, Fort St George (which became Madras – now Chennai) and on the Hooghly River which became known as Calcutta (now Kolkata). The company was given a monopoly of trade to India and China, and had its own fleet of ships.

Three presidencies were set up in the region of Bengal in the eastern subcontinent, Madras and Bombay each with separate armies. Bengal eventually covered land in present-day Pakistan, the northern part of India, Bangladesh and Burma (now Myanmar). Gradually the EIC became the de facto government of India.

In 1803 the EIC's armies had 260,000 men – twice as many as the British Army. They consisted of both European regiments and 'Native' Indian regiments, which had European officers rather than Indian ones.

The EIC lost the monopoly of trade to India in 1813 and to China in 1834. In 1857 the Indian Rebellion took place, mainly in the Bengal Presidency. The company was able to quell the uprising with assistance from the British Army, but the UK government decided it was time to take control of India itself and formed the India Office for this purpose. The EIC's armies were merged with the British Army, and the Indian Civil Service (ICS) was governed from London.

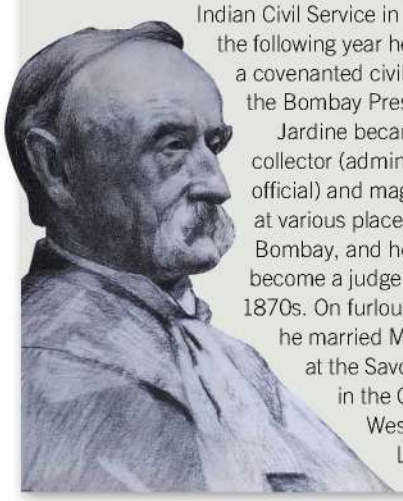
Excellent Records

Thankfully for researchers, both the EIC and the India Office kept excellent records, and many of these were copied to the head office in ▶

Sir John Jardine 1844–1919

This civil servant spent over 30 years in India

John Jardine was born in Dunstable, Bedfordshire, in 1844 and he attended Christ's College at the University of Cambridge, where he was awarded the Chancellor's Gold Medal for English Verse. He passed the examinations for the Indian Civil Service in 1863, and the following year he became a covenanted civil servant in the Bombay Presidency.



Jardine became a collector (administrative official) and magistrate at various places around Bombay, and he eventually become a judge in the 1870s. On furlough in 1880 he married Minnie Hogg at the Savoy Chapel in the City of Westminster, London.

He was appointed as a judicial commissioner to Burma in 1878, and researched and wrote guidance on Burmese law that was used by British judges in the country.

Back in Bombay Jardine became chief secretary to the Bombay government in 1885, responsible for the Political, Secret, Educational, Persian and Judicial portfolios.

Six years later he became a judge in the High Court of Judicature in Bombay. Having been elected fellow of the University of Bombay in 1872, he then became vice chancellor in 1895. He retired back to the UK in 1897, and became a Knight Commander of the Order of the Indian Empire the same year.

Jardine also had a career in politics. In 1906 he was elected as the Liberal MP for Roxburghshire in the Southern Uplands of Scotland.

He was made a baronet in 1916, and retired from Parliament in 1918. He died the following year at his home in Godalming, Surrey.

GETTY IMAGES

London. This material is now located in the collection held by the British Library (BL; **bl.uk**) in St Pancras, North-West London.

Incumbents in Christian churches in India were required to send copies of their baptism, marriage and burial records to the head office. The BL estimates that it has about 70 per cent of these records up to India's gaining independence in 1947. Although there are gaps, these records are one of the best ways of tracing the family history of individuals who served in the country. The collection of these registers together with wills, civil-service pensions, military records etc have been digitised by Findmypast (**findmypast.co.uk/articles/world-records/search-all-uk-records/special-collections/british-india-office-collection**). The BL can provide certified copies of these documents on request if required. The original hard-copy indexes of baptisms, marriages and burials are available, and sometimes include documents not found on Findmypast. Catholic ceremonies were not included until the 1820s. Some records extend up to 1968.

Expert Picks

Mike recommends the rich online resources available on these three websites

BACSA

w **bacsa.org.uk**

The British Association For Cemeteries in South Asia's site has a database of European civilians buried in India.

FIBIS

w **fibis.org**

The Families in British India Society has created a database of names of Europeans in India, as well as a wiki of terms covering a range of topics.

Findmypast

w **bit.ly/fmp-british-india-office-collection**

The British India Office Collection includes directories; wills; baptisms, marriages and burials; and newspapers.

Left to right: an officer, officer-cadet and subaltern in the East India Company's army during the middle of the 19th century

Trained In Hertford

Civil servants were often trained by the EIC at Haileybury College, near Hertford in Hertfordshire, before travelling to India. Their appointments are recorded in the BL's collection. In the second half of the 19th century examinations were conducted to decide who should be appointed to the ICS. These candidates filled the more senior positions in India. They had to sign a covenant to ensure good behaviour, and provide two sureties (often family members) who would pay money if the civil servant did not fulfil their duties. Individuals who were recruited as civil servants locally in India were called 'uncovenanted' civil servants, and were only able to obtain junior positions.

Individuals recruited as civil servants locally in India could only obtain junior positions

Lists of civil servants both covenanted and uncovenanted are available only at the BL in class IOR/L/F/10. Details of which documents should be examined for specific departments and places can be found in the booklet *Fact File 7: Some Major Sources for Ancestors in the Indian Public Services* written by Lawrie Butler and published by the Families in British India Society (FIBIS) in 2012, which is still available from **fibis.org/store/fibis-books-and-publications/fibis-fact-files/bff-0007-some-major-sources-for-ancestors-in-the-indian-public-services/** (RRP £2.50). Staff lists of EIC's warehouses in East London are also available.

From the latter part of the 18th century officer cadets were recruited into the Bengal, Madras and Bombay armies. Many were initially trained at the Military Seminary in Addiscombe near Croydon, Surrey. Cadet papers initially only provided dates of baptism but more extensive papers were created from the 1820s that also included parents' names, details of the travel to India, the name of the military regiment, education, health, and who recommended and nominated them. Many of

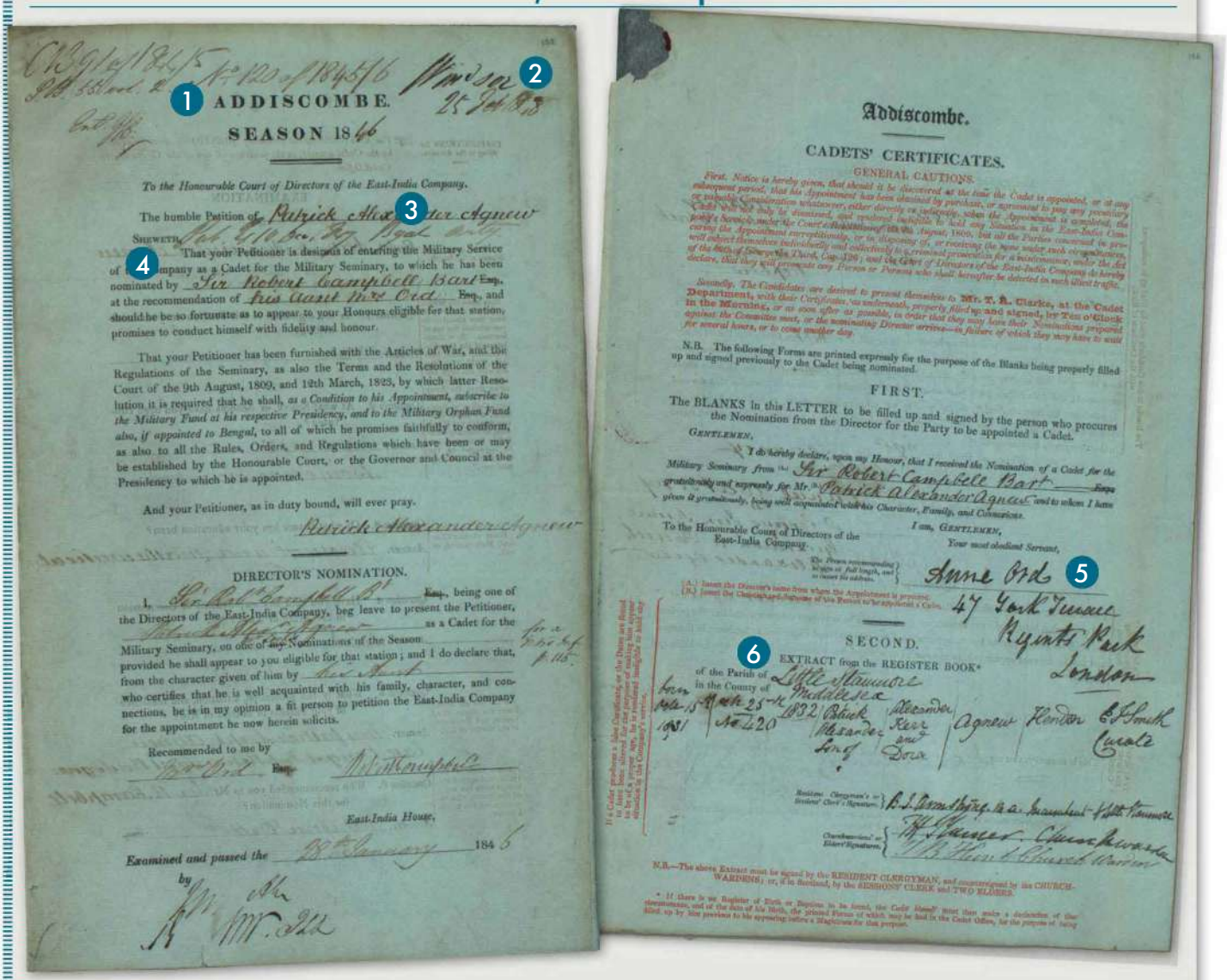
Did you know?

The East India Company owned Saint Helena in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean, and EIC ships often stopped there on the way back to Britain from India.

GETTY IMAGES

Cadet's Papers, 1846

The officer cadet certificates for Patrick Alexander Agnew are at the British Library and on Findmypast (**findmypast.co.uk**)



ADDISCOMBE.

SEASON 1846

To the Honourable Court of Directors of the East-India Company.

The humble Petition of Patrick Alexander Agnew

That your Petitioner is desirous of entering the Military Service of the Company as a Cadet for the Military Seminary, to which he has been nominated by Sir Robert Campbell Bart Esq. at the recommendation of his Aunt Mrs Ord Esq., and should he be so fortunate as to appear to your Honours eligible for that station, promises to conduct himself with fidelity and honour.

That your Petitioner has been furnished with the Articles of War, and the Regulations of the Seminary, as also the Terms and the Resolutions of the Court of the 9th August, 1809, and 12th March, 1823, by which latter Resolution it is required that he shall, *as a Condition to his Appointment, subscribe to the Military Fund of his respective Presidency, and to the Military Orphan Fund also, if appointed to Bengal*, to all of which he promises faithfully to conform, as also to all the Rules, Orders, and Regulations which have been or may be established by the Honourable Court, or the Governor and Council at the Presidency to which he is appointed.

And your Petitioner, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

Patrick Alexander Agnew

DIRECTOR'S NOMINATION.

I, Sir Rob Campbell Bt Esq., being one of the Directors of the East-India Company, beg leave to present the Petitioner, Patrick Alexander Agnew as a Cadet for the Military Seminary, on one of my Nominations of the Season provided he shall appear to you eligible for that station; and I do declare that, from the character given of him by who certifies that he is well acquainted with his family, character, and connections, he is in my opinion a fit person to petition the East-India Company for the appointment he now herein solicits.

Recommended to me by Mrs Ord Esq.

East-India House,

Examined and passed the 18 January 1846

by

Addiscombe.

CADETS' CERTIFICATES.

GENERAL CAUTIONS.

FIRST.

The BLANKS in this LETTER to be filled up and signed by the person who procures the Nomination from the Director for the Party to be appointed a Cadet.

GENTLEMEN,

I do hereby declare, upon my Honour, that I received the Nomination of a Cadet for the Military Seminary from Sir Robert Campbell Bart Esqr gratuitously and expressly for Mr. Patrick Alexander Agnew and to whom I have given it gratuitously, being well acquainted with his Character, Family, and Connections.

To the Honourable Court of Directors of the East-India Company.

I am, GENTLEMEN,
Your most obedient Servant,

Anne Ord
47 York Terrace
Regents Park
London

SECOND.

EXTRACT from the REGISTER BOOK* of the Parish of Little Stanmore in the County of Middlesex

Born	Baptized						
1831	1832	Patrick Alexander Lord	Alexander Rear and Dora	Agnew	Hendon	B J Smith Curate	

Rectors' Clergyman's or Readers' Clerk's Signature

Churchwardens' or Elders' Signatures

N.B.—The above Extract must be signed by the RESIDENT CLERGYMAN, and countersigned by the CHURCH-WARDENS; or, if in Scotland, by the BISHOPS' CLERK and TWO ELDERS.

* If there is no Register of Birth or Baptism to be found, the Cadet himself must then make a declaration of the circumstances, and of the date of his Birth, the printed Forms of which may be had in the Cadet Office, for the purpose of being filled up by him previous to his appearing before a Magistrate for that purpose.

1 Addiscombe
Officer cadets were frequently initially sent to the Military Seminary in Addiscombe, near Croydon, before being dispatched to join one of the armies in India.

2 Windsor
This is the name of the ship on which Patrick Alexander Agnew sailed to India. The departure date is also recorded here: 25 February 1848.

3 Bengal
Agnew was posted on 10 December 1847 to the Bengal Artillery after his initial training was completed.

4 Nominated By
Cadets were always nominated by a director of the East India Company. In this case Sir Robert Campbell nominated Agnew based on the recommendation of the cadet's aunt, a "Mrs Ord".

5 Anne Ord
Those who recommended a cadet, in this case Agnew's aunt, were asked to supply their address, here 47 York Terrace, Regent's Park, London.

6 Extract
Useful for family history, a transcript of the cadet's baptism record, complete with parents' names, is included, and signed by the incumbent and churchwardens.

these documents have been digitised by Findmypast and are included in the database of 'British India Office Births & Baptisms' at **search.findmypast.co.uk/search-world-records/british-india-office-births-and-baptisms**.

Records of officers and men who served in the EIC's private navy the Bombay Marine are also in the BL collection including logbooks, crew lists and passenger lists up to 1834.

Soldiers in the ranks for European regiments were also recorded including recruitment registers, embarkation details on ships, and service in India.

It should be remembered that regiments of the British Army were also stationed ▶

Staff from the Science College at Patna enjoying an al fresco meal in the early 1920s

in India at the same time as the armies of the EIC. The British Army's records are held by The National Archives at Kew (TNA; **nationalarchives.gov.uk**).

The Anglo-Indian descendants of Europeans who married members of the local population were largely Christian; as a result their baptism, marriages and burials are part of the records in the BL. They tended to have specific occupations including personnel on the railways and bandsmen in the military regiments.

In addition to men who worked for the government in various capacities, there were others who worked independent of the government including tea and indigo planters. Directories of India such as Thacker's Directory give a very useful listing of those working in the country from 1863. These directories are on the open shelves in the BL, and some have been digitised – see the 'Directories online' page of FIBIS's wiki at **wiki.fibis.org/w/Directories_online**.

Brilliant Baxter

One of the best guides to the BL's collection is *Baxter's Guide: Biographical Sources in the India Office Records, 3rd Edition* by Ian A Baxter, former curator of the India Office records. It was published by FIBIS in 2004 (reprinted 2010) in association with the BL, and covers a wide range of EIC and India Office documents. You can order it via FIBIS's website at **fibis.org/store/fibis-books-and-publications/fibis-research-guides/baxter-s-guide-biographical-sources-in-the-india-office-records-by-ian-a-baxter-fibis-research-guide-no-1/** (RRP £5.95).

This is even more valuable at the moment because the library's Archives and Manuscripts Catalogue was one of the casualties of the cyber attack in October 2023, and is still not available at the time of writing. Parts of the catalogue have been added to TNA's online catalogue Discovery (**discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk**).

The hard-copy catalogues are available at the library on the open shelves of the Asian and African Reading Room. You will also find the minutes of the Court of Directors – the board in London that governed the EIC – in the B series up to 1857.

The records of the EIC and the India Office are extensive, and can sometimes be challenging to use. However, the wealth of information about the families who are included in these documents means that it's definitely worth the extra effort.

TOP TIP!

The British Library offers free in-person courses for those researching Europeans in India, on such topics as baptism, marriage and burial records, and military records.

MIKE TRENCHARD is a fellow of the Association of Genealogists and Researchers in Archives (AGRA) whose specialities include British India. Find out more at **trenchardpartnership.co.uk**

Resources

Take your research further

BOOKS

An Introduction to British Ships in Indian Waters, 2nd Edn
Richard Morgan
FIBIS, 2017
FIBIS's second research guide covers vessels owned by the East India Company, merchant ships privately owned by European 'free mariners' ('country ships'), and unauthorised vessels.

Researching Ancestors in the East India Company Armies
Peter A Bailey
FIBIS, 2006
The society's first research guide covers officers and men up to 1860.

Researching Ancestors in the Indian Army, 1858–1947
Peter A Bailey
FIBIS, 2014
Bailey has also written FIBIS's third research guide.

Tracing Your British Indian Ancestors
Emma Jolly
Pen & Sword, 2012
Jolly explains the range of records for researchers.

WEBSITES

ANCESTRY
w **bit.ly/anc-eic-reg**
Ancestry's database 'UK, Registers of Employees of the East India Company and the India Office, 1746–1939' contains 643,303 records.

FAMILYSEARCH
w **tinyurl.com/fs-wiki-ind**
This page of the site's wiki has links to Indian material here and on other websites.

UNTOLD LIVES
w **blogs.bl.uk/untoldlives/**
This blog shares stories about British India from the British Library's collections.

GETTY IMAGES

English Civil War

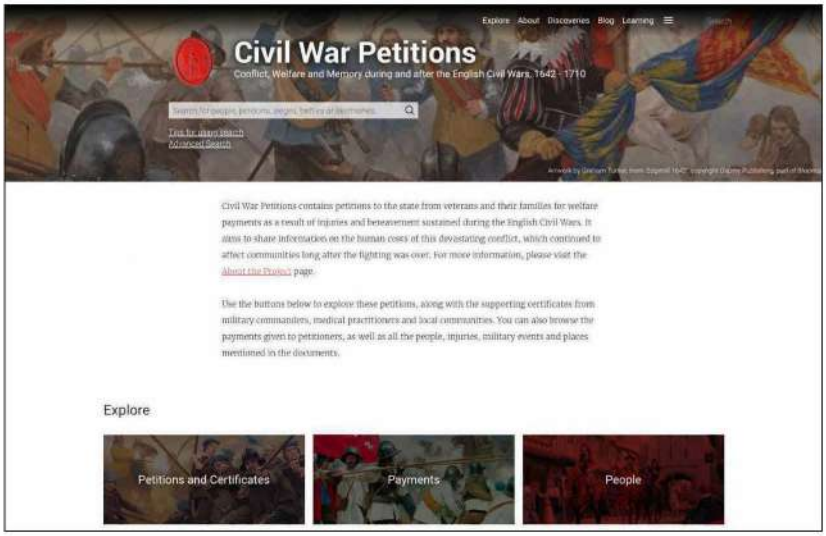
The New Model Army beat the Royalists at the Battle of Naseby on 14 June 1645

Jonathan Scott introduces a wealth of online resources to help you research the conflict

The 1640s was a decade of sieges, battles, stalemates, flights, executions and constitutions. Traces of this terrible decade can still be seen all over the country. Newark-on-Trent in Nottinghamshire, for example, was a key Royalist stronghold, being at the crossroads of the Great North Road and the Fosse Way. It was besieged on multiple occasions during the Civil War, and the spire of St Mary Magdalene Parish Church includes an almost perfectly round hole that is said to have been made by a Parliamentarian cannonball in 1644.

The Civil War is the bloodiest conflict in English history, in terms of the percentage of the population killed or wounded. It was also not one simple war but rather a series, broken up by periods of infighting.

Even as the First Civil War ended in 1646, for example, there was split forming between the New Model Army and Parliament. With the economy in a parlous state, Parliament was desperate to cut costs by partially disbanding its forces. The New Model Army, unsurprisingly, saw this act as a betrayal.



CIVIL WAR PETITIONS

W **www.civilwarpetitions.ac.uk**

The war left behind bereaved, destitute families and wounded soldiers unable to work, who wrote petitions to the authorities requesting financial help. Here you can search thousands of digitised examples, narrowing by payments, people, injuries and ailments, events or places. For instance, Welsh labourer David Edward had "received several hurts… especially one hurte vpon his thigh, which much disabled him from getting living by his day laboure as form[er]ly he had don". Each case has a summary of all of the information, noting the outcome of the petition, and any events, people or places mentioned. David took part in both the Battle of Holt Bridge in November 1643 and the Siege of Chester (1645–1646), and won a quarterly pension of 5s.

GETTY IMAGES

BEST WEBSITES

BRITISH HISTORY ONLINE

w **www.british-history.ac.uk/no-series/cromwell-army-officers**

Another useful resource is this British History Online directory created by the Cromwell Association, which promotes interest in the life of the Lord Protector. The directory contains details of officers who served in the armies of Parliament before the New Model Army was formed in 1645. While not claiming to be comprehensive, it boasts the names of more than 4,000 men from all over England and Wales. BHO also has journals from the Lords and Commons, as well as Acts and Ordinances passed between 1642 and 1660. You can find out more about the association's work at **olivercromwell.org/wordpress/**.

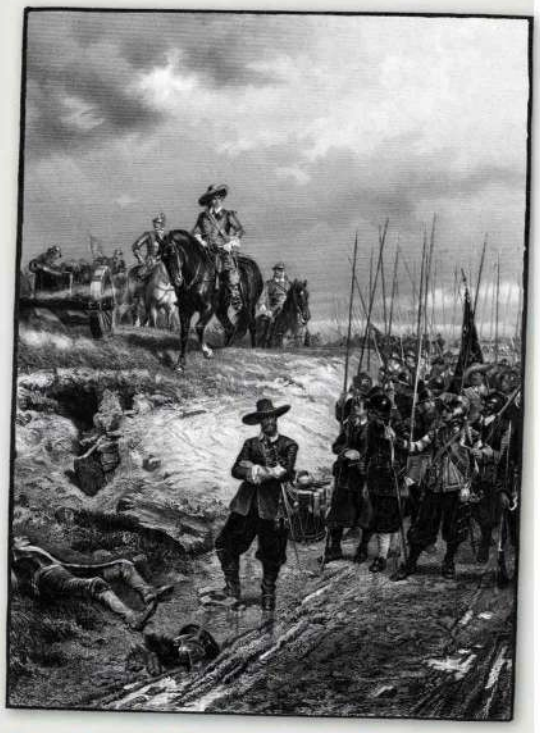
THE BRITISH CIVIL WARS MEMORIAL DATABASE

w **battlefieldstrust.com/memorial/**

The Battlefields Trust's British Civil Wars Memorial Database is a relatively new project that records monuments, memorials and information boards, and already has 440 entries including church plaques and ordinary gravestones. One example is a mottled, lichen-covered stone in Warmington, Northamptonshire, that marks the resting place of Alexander Gourdin, a Scottish officer in the Royalist army killed at the Battle of Edgehill in October 1642. Each comes with a precise geolocation and in many cases a photograph, and you can submit a new entry online. You can also find details of specific battles at **battlefieldstrust.com/resource-centre/civil-war/**.

EXPERT'S CHOICE

Dr Angela Smith is the co-author of *Tracing Your Ancestors Using the UK Historical Timeline* (Pen & Sword, 2021)



Oliver Cromwell *(on horseback)* led the Parliamentarian cavalry at the Battle of Marston Moor on 2 July 1644

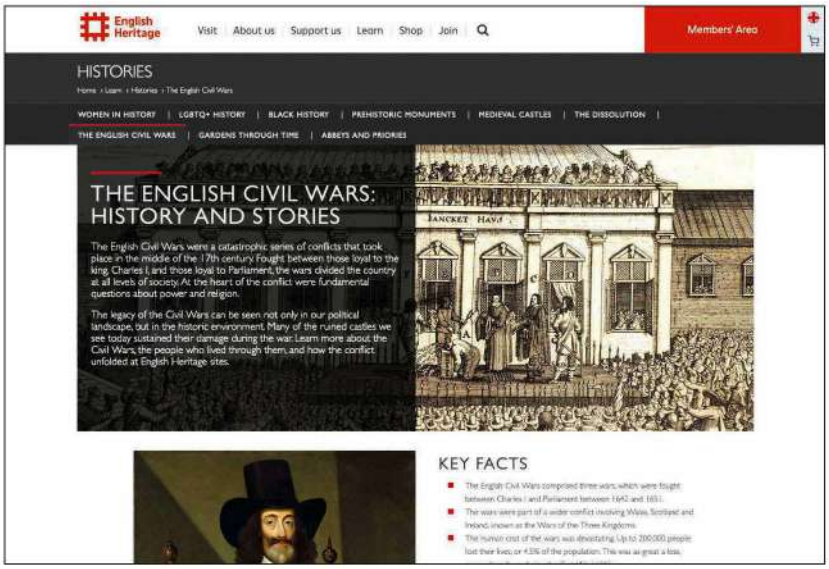
The World Turned Upside Down (**www.worldturnedupsidedown.co.uk**) takes its name from a famous Civil War ballad, first published in the 1640s on a broadside protesting Parliament's outlawing traditional Christmas celebrations. This is a fairly new website, which aims to tell the stories of "people, events and ideas of the Civil War". It isn't designed specifically for genealogists, but it's full of content that will help anyone trying to gain a broader sense of exactly what was going on.

The website hosts fortnightly podcasts featuring leading historians. One recent example is *Women and Cromwell's Navy – the Hidden Story*, a succinct but fascinating examination of a little-known subject from Elaine Murphy of the University of Plymouth. Other episodes look at the growing division between the New Model Army and Parliament at the end of the First Civil War, seen through the lens of the Saffron Walden debates; *Living Through Civil War Sieges in Newark – the Civilian Experience*; and the Civil Wars Memorial Database that Jonathan mentions.

Some of the podcasts use a conversational approach while others are a simple monologue, and transcripts are available to read or download.

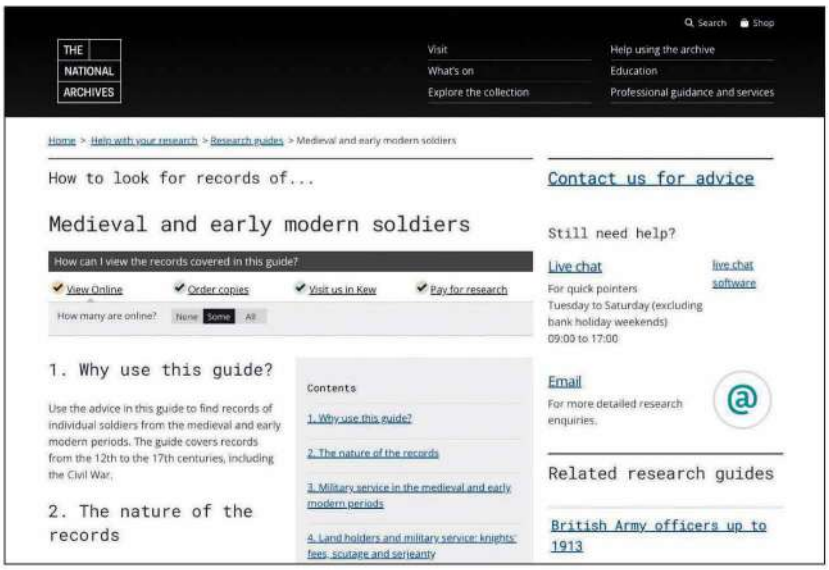
Other highlights include a very useful timeline, a detailed glossary of terms, and a handful of maps illustrating the areas held by the Parliamentarian or Royalist armies at various points in the conflict.

GETTY IMAGES



ENGLISH HERITAGE

w **english-heritage.org.uk/learn/histories/the-english-civil-wars-history-and-stories/**
This fascinating section of the English Heritage website seeks to place the "catastrophic series of conflicts" within the context of the built environment, exploring how the Civil War unfolded at various sites that are managed by the organisation. There's a great deal for you to explore here, but some interesting examples include the descriptions of the life for captives at Carisbrooke Castle on the Isle of Wight, where Charles I was held. There's also a series of artefacts that were discovered at the bottom of a well at Goodrich Castle in the West Midlands in the 1920s, which reveal a great deal about life under siege.



THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES

w **tinyurl.com/tna-guide-med-early-mod-sold**
TNA's online guide to researching medieval and early-modern soldiers covers both the Civil War and the Interregnum. The web page lists some of the sources that survive for Royalist and Parliamentary forces. It should be noticed that while there are useful references to Royalist officers within various record series, there is very little material on the rank and file. Other research guides cover related subjects such as the confiscations of Crown and Royalist lands, and within various classroom resources you'll find a section on how the Civil War affected women (**nationalarchives.gov.uk/education/resources/women-english-civil-wars/**).

Go Further

More websites you can't afford to miss

JOHN HAMPDEN SOCIETY

w **johnhampden.org**
Hampden was one of the leading architects of the resistance to Charles I's arbitrary rule during the years leading up to the outbreak of the Civil War. The society's website includes a family tree and advice for genealogists.

NATIONAL ARMY MUSEUM

w **nam.ac.uk/subjects/british-civil-wars**
This web page includes a detailed illustrated timeline, in addition to written accounts from various eyewitnesses.

NATIONAL CIVIL WAR CENTRE

w **nationalcivilwarcentre.com**
Find out more about the Newark-on-Trent museum's projects, upcoming events and some of the objects preserved here – including a 1646 siege map of the town on vellum.

PARLIAMENTARY ARCHIVES

w **archives.parliament.uk**
Here you can explore 500 years of parliamentary history and view surviving Protestation Returns from 1642, when every adult male had to swear an oath of allegiance to Protestantism. The archives themselves are currently being relocated to The National Archives at Kew.

THE CROMWELL MUSEUM

w **cromwellmuseum.org**
The museum is located in the former Huntingdon Grammar School building where Cromwell was educated as a boy, and holds artworks, arms and armour, documents, coins, personal items and medals. You can view highlights at **cromwellmuseum.org/cromwell/key-collections**.

THE SEALED KNOT

w **thesealedknot.org.uk**
This long-standing re-enactment society, focused on the Civil War, "brings history to life by staging events throughout the country all year round".

WIKIPEDIA

w **en.wikipedia.org/wiki/English_Civil_War**
Wikipedia can help you get to grips with the complicated political factions that were at work at different times during the conflict.

Officers of RMS *Carpathia* with a cup presented by *Titanic* survivors in 1912

Masters' And Mates' Certificates

Phil Brown explains how to use these essential records to research a Merchant Navy ancestor

The Merchant Navy is a collective term for the UK's commercial shipping industry, bestowed by George V in February 1928 in recognition of service in the First World War. Previously our civilian ships and crews were known as the Merchant Service, with origins in the 17th century.

Documentation about the men on the ships was mostly limited to muster books, until the 1835 Merchant Seamen Act created central registers of seafarers.

The senior officer in the ship's chain of command was the master, also known as captain, commander, skipper or, generically, mariner. The master was supported by his first mate, second mate, third mate, etc. They were, and still are, known as the chief officer, the second officer and the third officer.

Masters' and mates' certificates of competency started from 1 November 1845, following an order by the Lords of the Committee of Privy Council for Trade to prove they had the necessary skills and experience to command their vessels. The order stated that candidates "must produce sufficient evidence of their ages, and certificates of service and sobriety, general good character and conduct", with "particular care" taken by the examiners "to satisfy themselves as to the habitual sobriety of the party". Other requirements included the ability "to write a legible hand", and understanding of "the first five rules of arithmetic"; "knowledge of seamanship, of rigging vessels, stowing holds, &c."; and the ability to use a compass and a quadrant or sextant, and to understand the construction of Mercator charts which were used for marine navigation.

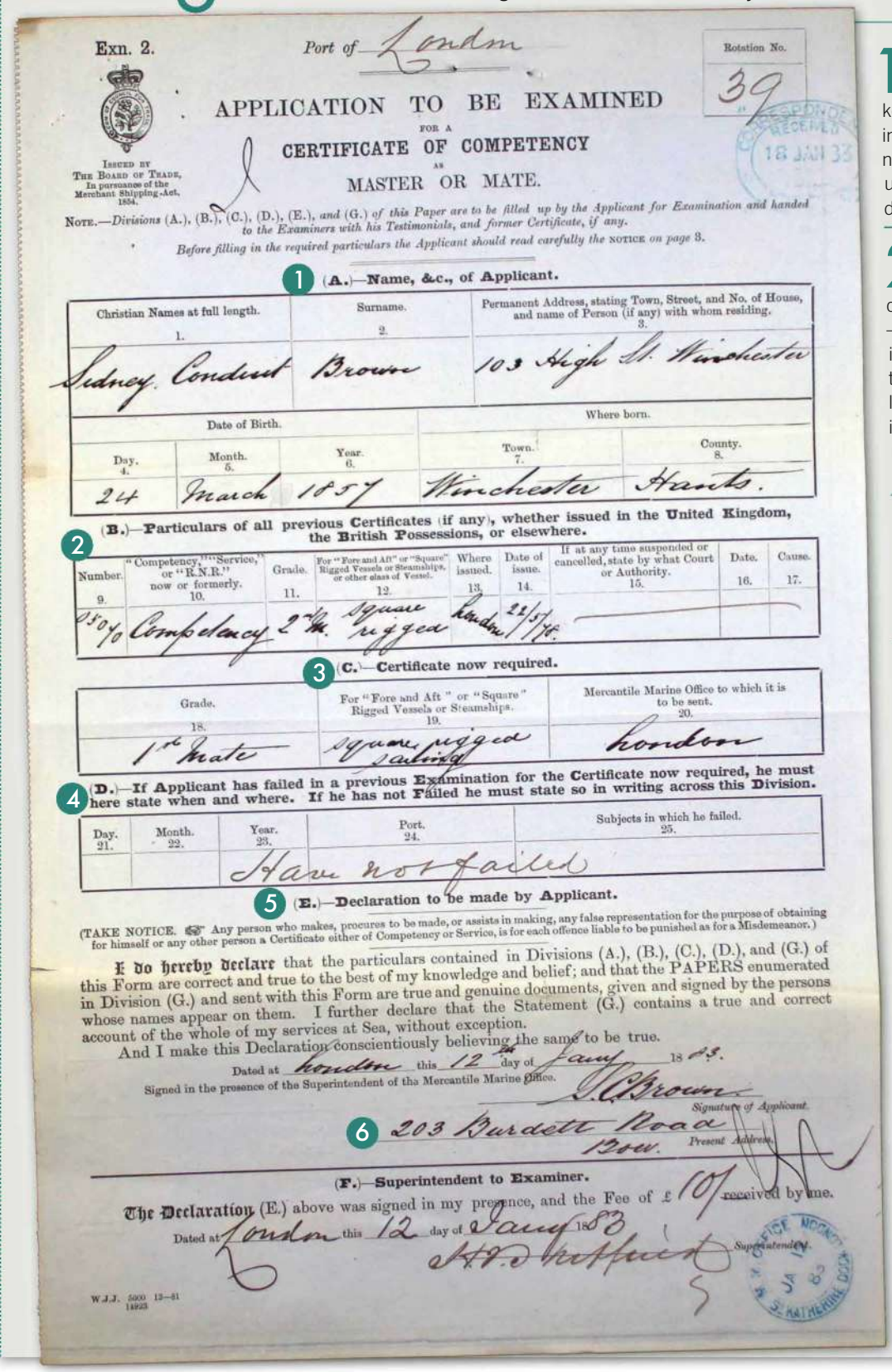
The 1835 Merchant Seamen Act created central registers of seafarers

The order also notes: "In the event of any candidate proving himself to have

GETTY IMAGES

Application To Be Examined, 1883

This page of an application to be examined for a certificate of competency as master or mate is held by the National Maritime Museum (**rmg.co.uk/collections/caird-library**) and available on Ancestry (**ancestry.co.uk**)



Exn. 2.

Port of London

Rotation No. 39

APPLICATION TO BE EXAMINED FOR A CERTIFICATE OF COMPETENCY AS MASTER OR MATE.

Issued by The Board of Trade, in pursuance of the Merchant Shipping Act, 1854.

Note.—*Divisions (A.), (B.), (C.), (D.), (E.), and (G.) of this Paper are to be filled up by the Applicant for Examination and handed to the Examiners with his Testimonials, and former Certificate, if any.*

Before filling in the required particulars the Applicant should read carefully the Notice *on page 3.*

1 **(A.)—Name, &c., of Applicant.**

Christian Names at full length. 1.	Surname. 2.	Permanent Address, stating Town, Street, and No. of House, and name of Person (if any) with whom residing. 3.
Sidney Conduit	Brown	103 High St. Winchester

Date of Birth.			Where born.	
Day. 4.	Month. 5.	Year. 6.	Town. 7.	County. 8.
24	March	1857	Winchester	Hants.

2 **(B.)—Particulars of all previous Certificates (if any), whether issued in the United Kingdom, the British Possessions, or elsewhere.**

Number. 9.	"Competency," "Service," or "R.N.R." now or formerly. 10.	Grade. 11.	For "Fore and Aft" or "Square" Rigged Vessels or Steamships, or other class of Vessel. 12.	Where issued. 13.	Date of issue. 14.	If at any time suspended or cancelled, state by what Court or Authority. 15.	Date. 16.	Cause. 17.
05070	Competency	2nd Mate	Square rigged	London	21/5/78			

3 **(C.)—Certificate now required.**

Grade. 18.	For "Fore and Aft" or "Square" Rigged Vessels or Steamships. 19.	Mercantile Marine Office to which it is to be sent. 20.
1st Mate	Square rigged sailing	London

4 **(D.)—If Applicant has failed in a previous Examination for the Certificate now required, he must here state when and where. If he has not Failed he must state so in writing across this Division.**

Day. 21.	Month. 22.	Year. 23.	Port. 24.	Subjects in which he failed. 25.
		Have not failed		

5 **(E.)—Declaration to be made by Applicant.**

(TAKE NOTICE. ☞ Any person who makes, procures to be made, or assists in making, any false representation for the purpose of obtaining for himself or any other person a Certificate either of Competency or Service, is for each offence liable to be punished as for a Misdemeanor.)

I do hereby declare that the particulars contained in Divisions (A.), (B.), (C.), (D.), and (G.) of this Form are correct and true to the best of my knowledge and belief; and that the PAPERS enumerated in Division (G.) and sent with this Form are true and genuine documents, given and signed by the persons whose names appear on them. I further declare that the Statement (G.) contains a true and correct account of the whole of my services at Sea, without exception.

And I make this Declaration conscientiously believing the same to be true.

Dated at London this 12th day of January 1883.

Signed in the presence of the Superintendent of the Mercantile Marine Office.

S. C. Brown
Signature of Applicant.

6 203 Burdett Road Bow.
Present Address.

(F.)—Superintendent to Examiner.

The Declaration (E.) above was signed in my presence, and the Fee of £ 10/ received by me.

Dated at London this 12 day of Jany 1883

Superintendent.

W.J.J. 5000 13—81 14923

1 Name, &c.

The first section contains key genealogical information including the officer's full name Sidney Conduit Brown, usual home address, and date and place of birth.

2 Particulars

This section reveals the officer's current qualification – the previous grade attained is second mate. You can use the reference number on the left ("05070") to find Sidney in the index to certificate names (BT 127) at The National Archives.

3 Certificate Now Required

Here we see the grade being applied for (in this case first mate), and type of vessel.

4 Previous Examination

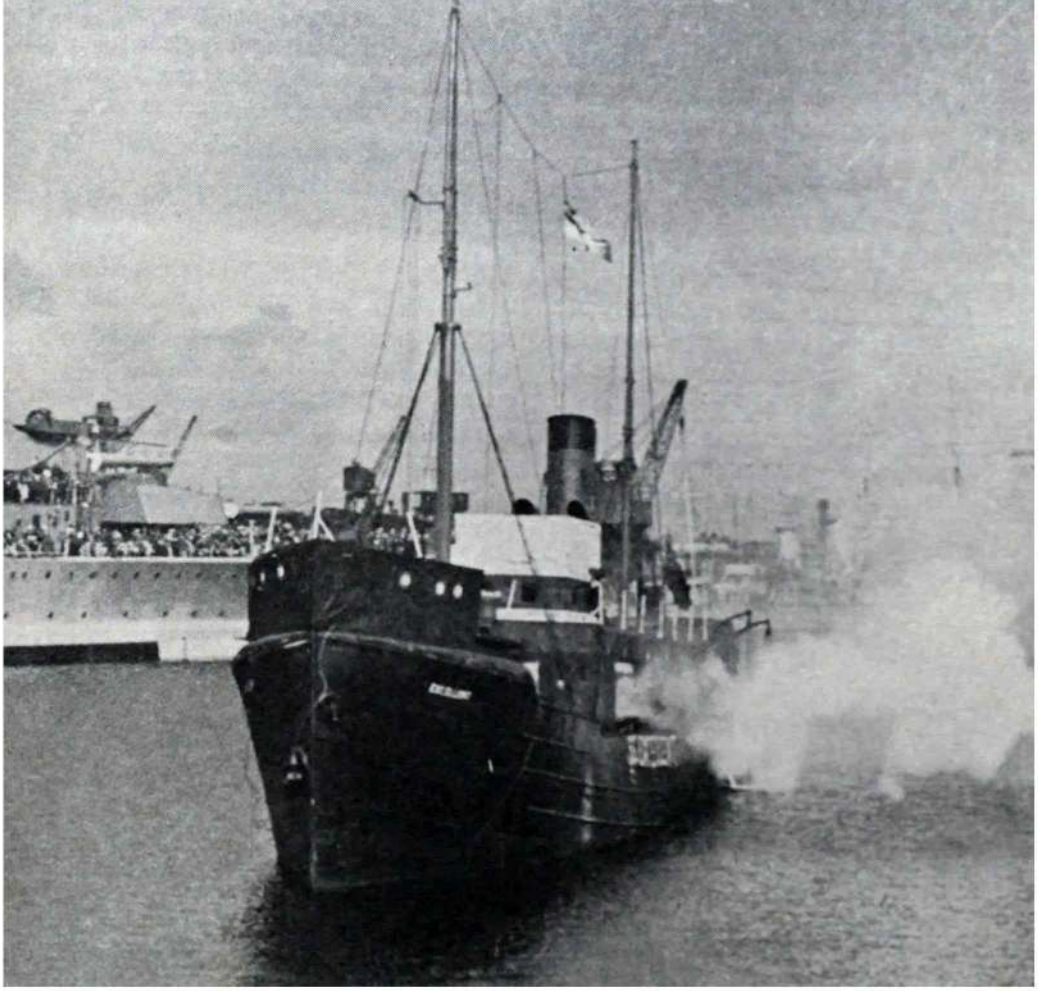
The candidate was asked to complete this section if he had previously failed an examination for the required certificate.

5 Declaration

Note the signature of the candidate; the handwriting looks like the text on the rest of the form, indicating a level of literacy.

6 Present Address

This doesn't match the address provided in the first section, so might have been temporary accommodation.



This First World War merchant vessel is an example of a 'Q-ship': one given hidden weaponry and used by the Royal Navy

higher attainments than the foregoing, such as being well versed in great circle sailing, spherical trigonometry, marine surveying, and a more extensive knowledge of astronomy, it is to be noted in his certificate, and is to entitle him to have 'class 1, extra,' thereon."

Initially certification was voluntary, but it was made compulsory by the 1850 Mercantile Marine Act for masters and mates on foreign-going ships.

In the 1854 Merchant Shipping Act this was extended to the operation of vessels in home waters.

Note that masters and mates already serving were issued with certificates of service instead of certificates of competency, because it was deemed unreasonable for seasoned and experienced seafaring officers to take an examination. Written proof of their service at sea sufficed.

Certificates are held at The National Archives at Kew (TNA; **nationalarchives.gov.uk**) in series BT – Board of Trade. Information on the certificates is available in the research guide to Merchant Navy officers at **nationalarchives.gov.uk/help-with-your-research/research-guides/officers-merchant-navy/**. Certificates of competency for foreign service are in BT 122, and for home service in BT 125. Certificates of service for foreign service are in BT 124, and for home service in BT 126. You will find an index to certificate names in BT 127.

Also Ancestry has the collection 'UK and Ireland, Masters and Mates Certificates, 1850–1927' containing 281,933 certificates: **ancestry.co.uk/search/collections/2271/**. This record set comes from the Caird Library and Archive (**rmg.co.uk/collections/caird-library**) at the National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, South-East London, which has copies of the TNA certificates together with supporting papers and letters, reference RSS/MC; XX(62971.1).

The records contain a wealth of information. These should be scrutinised as much as possible, looking for every clue and snippet from the images of the original records. They include: the officer's name; date and place of certification; place and year of birth; certificate number and grade; record of voyages (certificates up to 1888 only); and date of death (certificates after 1888 only – and only sometimes).

We cannot always find a mariner at home on census-enumeration night. Masters' and mates' certificates are particularly helpful here, because the supporting documentation has records of officers' voyages with dates. Although the certificates on Ancestry and at the museum are limited to 1850–1927, roughly coinciding with the published census records of 1841–1921, other records prior and subsequent can be found via the 'Resources' box to take research further.

TOP TIP!

When viewing images in Ancestry's collection, you may find several certificates interspersed with pages of supporting information for the same officer.

RESOURCES

Take your research further

BOOK

Tracing Your Merchant Navy Ancestors
Simon Wills
Pen & Sword, 2012
The fifth chapter of this guide written by a much-missed contributor to this magazine, 'Captains and Other Officers', discusses a wide range of useful sources including masters' and mates' certificates.

MUSEUMS AND ARCHIVES

CAIRD LIBRARY AND ARCHIVE
a **National Maritime Museum, Romney Road, London SE10 9NF**
t 020 8312 6516
e *library@rmg.co.uk*
w **rmg.co.uk/collections/caird-library**
The library has many resources for the Merchant Navy, including masters' and mates' certificates and supporting papers.

THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES
a **Kew, Richmond TW9 4DU**
w **nationalarchives.gov.uk**
TNA has produced 13 guides related to the material available for researching ancestors in the Merchant Navy, which you can access via **tinyurl.com/tna-guides-m**.

PHIL BROWN is a member of the Association of Genealogists and Researchers in Archives (AGRA). You can find out more information at **agra.org.uk/phil-brown-genealogist-in-hampshire**

GETTY IMAGES

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Q&A

Our team of experts offers tips and inspiration Edited By Claire Vaughan

Katherine Cobb is a member of AGRA based in Somerset

Roger Kershaw is migration records specialist at The National Archives

Nicola Morris is a genealogist based in Dublin (**timeline.ie**)

Jayne Shrimpton is a professional dress historian and portrait specialist

Steve Thomas is a genealogist with over 20 years' experience

Phil Tomaselli is a military family history expert and author

Why did Edward Alfred Kemp receive the Croix de Guerre?

Q I'm researching Edward Alfred Kemp (born 1881), who served in the Royal Navy during the First World War. He was awarded the *Croix de Guerre* in 1919, but I cannot find out why. It was listed in the *London Gazette* on 1 April 1919. The events leading up to this award must have been chronicled somewhere.
Georgina Milligan

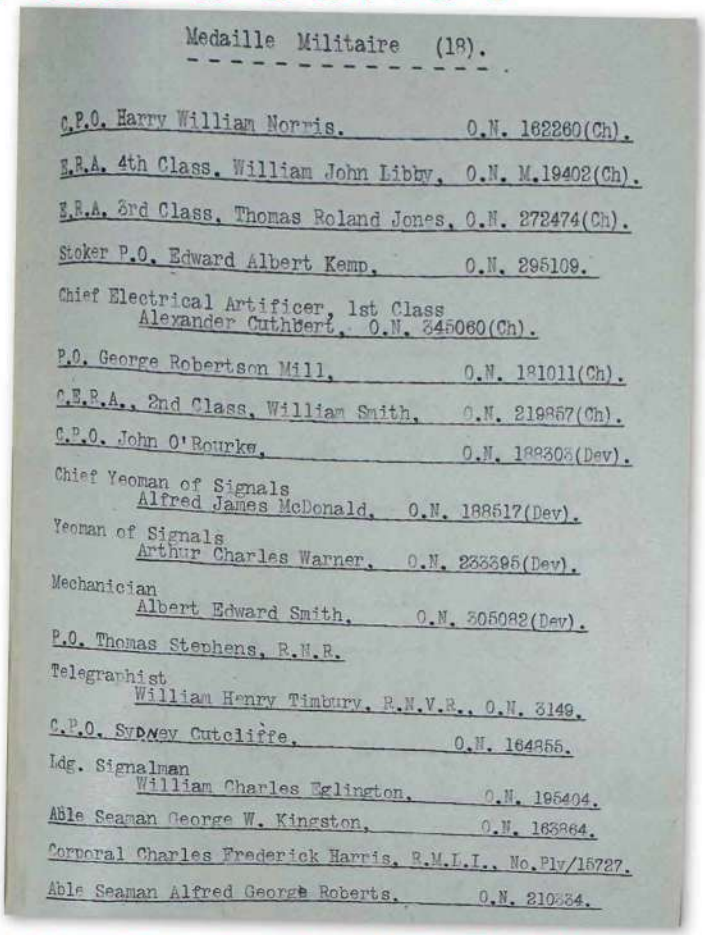
A I was able to find some information in The National Archives at Kew (TNA; **nationalarchives.gov.uk**) about the awarding of the *Croix de Guerre* to Edward Alfred Kemp.

Firstly, I consulted the index to Admiralty correspondence for 1918, and found a reference in ADM 12/1596B indicating letters relating to the award dated 7 August. Sadly, the actual documentation hasn't survived, so I turned my attention to Foreign Office correspondence. Again, I found an index entry relating to Edward Alfred Kemp in FO 1111/3591/1, and this led me to correspondence of the Treaty Department of the Foreign Office. The subjects covered in this series include honours and decorations. In FO 372/1123, I found what I was looking for – a list of French decorations for British naval officers, ratings and Admiralty officials in July 1918, but sadly the correspondence fails to detail the reason why the *Médaille militaire* was awarded to stoker Petty Officer Edward Alfred Kemp. Instead, it relates to whether or not permission should be granted to a civilian to wear the decoration.

So, unfortunately, all the correspondence does is list Kemp with other ratings, and confirm that the honour was awarded to him towards the end of the First World War. In most cases, foreign awards did not have a nationally published citation describing the acts or services for which they were given, though these are sometimes mentioned in local newspaper articles, but I couldn't find any reference to Edward Alfred Kemp when I searched the British Newspaper Archive (**britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk**).

The *Médaille militaire* was given to other ranks for meritorious service and acts of bravery in action against an enemy force. It is the third highest award of the French Republic; the highest is the Legion of Honour, a civil and military order, and the second highest is the Order of Liberation, awarded in the Second World War.

During the First World War, 230,000 *médailles* were awarded, including some to other ranks of allied nations, as they were in the Crimean War of the 1850s.
Roger Kershaw



Medaille Militaire (18).

C.P.O. Harry William Norris. O.N. 162260(Ch).
E.R.A. 4th Class. William John Libby. O.N. M.19402(Ch).
E.R.A. 3rd Class. Thomas Roland Jones. O.N. 272474(Ch).
Stoker P.O. Edward Albert Kemp. O.N. 295109.
Chief Electrical Artificer, 1st Class Alexander Cuthbert. O.N. 345060(Ch).
P.O. George Robertson Mill. O.N. 181011(Ch).
C.E.R.A., 2nd Class. William Smith. O.N. 219857(Ch).
C.P.O. John O'Rourke. O.N. 188308(Dev).
Chief Yeoman of Signals Alfred James McDonald. O.N. 188517(Dev).
Yeoman of Signals Arthur Charles Warner. O.N. 233395(Dev).
Mechanician Albert Edward Smith. O.N. 305082(Dev).
P.O. Thomas Stephens. R.N.R.
Telegraphist William Henry Timbury. R.N.V.R., O.N. 3149.
C.P.O. Sydney Cutcliffe. O.N. 164355.
Ldg. Signalman William Charles Eglington. O.N. 195404.
Able Seaman George W. Kingston. O.N. 163864.
Corporal Charles Frederick Harris. R.M.L.I., No.Plv/15727.
Able Seaman Alfred George Roberts. O.N. 210334.

Roger uncovered documentation relating to Edward's medal at The National Archives, but unfortunately there is no record of why he received the award

HAVE YOU HIT A BRICK WALL? Please email your questions or family photographs to the following address: **wdytyaquestions@ourmedia.co.uk**

If selected, your query will be answered on these pages. Please note that we receive a large volume of correspondence each month, and cannot reply to each message individually. You are more likely to receive a response if you keep the question and background information concise (no more than 150 words), with a clear goal of enquiry.

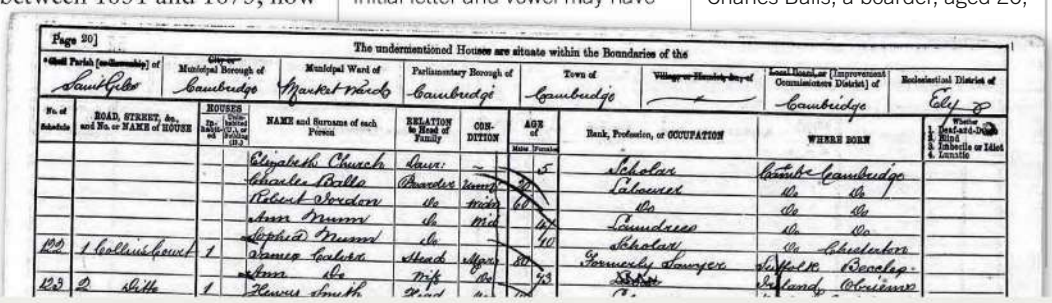
Where was Charles Balls between 1851 and 1875?

Q Charles Balls, my great great grandfather, was born on 6 November 1846 in Cambridge to John William Balls and Eliza Balls (née Wheeler). He is with his parents and older brother on the 1851 census at Globe Passage, St Sepulchre, but he disappears until 5 April 1875 when he marries Sarah Ambrose (from Willingham, Cambridgeshire) in Darnall, Yorkshire. I think that he moved north to work on the railways. What was he doing between 1851 and 1875, how did he meet Sarah, and when did he move to Yorkshire?
Ed Ball

A When a person cannot be traced, looking at the wider family may help. Charles' mother probably died in 1859 and although I couldn't find Charles and his father in the 1861 census, I discovered his older brother living with their grandmother at Globe Passage. Maybe try expanding the census search further, to include surnames ending 'lls', as the initial letter and vowel may have been mistranscribed. Although the most likely scenario is that Charles was with his father in 1861, it is worth considering whether he joined the Army as a boy soldier. Findmypast's 1861 British Army Worldwide Index (**bit.ly/fmp-1861-army-index**) includes several Charles Ball(s) entries – and if corresponding army service papers exist, it may be possible to establish whether one of these was your ancestor.

By 1871, Charles' father had remarried and was in Cambridge. The 1871 census *(pictured)* lists Charles Balls, a boarder, aged 20, born in Cambridge and living in Northampton Street in the city. As Charles' future wife, Sarah, was in Willingham in 1871, it seems likely that this census entry relates to your great great grandfather, and that they met in Cambridgeshire, moving to Yorkshire prior to their marriage.

The National Archives at Kew (TNA) holds employment records for several of the larger railway companies, and a guide can be found on its website (**nationalarchives.gov.uk**). More than two million of these records, spanning 1833–1956, can be searched at Ancestry (**ancestry.co.uk/search/collections/1728/**). They cover those of the Manchester, Sheffield & Lincolnshire Railway Company, and include possible entries for Charles in 1874 (although there is a discrepancy with his age) and others in January 1876.
Katherine Cobb


Page 20]

The undermentioned Houses are situate within the Boundaries of the

Parish	Municipal Borough	Municipal Ward	Parliamentary Borough	Town	Local Board (Improvement Commissioners District)	Ecclesiastical District
Saint Giles	Cambridge	Market Ward	Cambridge	Cambridge	Cambridge	Ely

No. of Schedule	Road, Street, &c., and No. or Name of House	Houses Inhabited	Houses Uninhabited	Name and Surname of each Person	Relation to Head of Family	Condition	Age Male	Age Female	Rank, Profession, or Occupation	Where Born	Whether Deaf-and-Dumb, Blind, Imbecile or Idiot, Lunatic
				Elizabeth Church	Daur.			5	Scholar	Parish Cambridge	
				Charles Balls	Boarder	Unm.	M		Labourer	do do	
				Robert Gordon	do	Widr.	M	60	do	do do	
				Ann Munn	do	Mid.		60	Laundress	do do	
				Sophia Munn	do			40	Scholar	do Shoreham	
122	1 Collins Court	1		James Baker	Head	Mar.	M	30	Formerly Lawyer	Suffolk Beccles	
				Ann do	Wife	do		23		Ireland Queens	
123	2 Ditto	1		Henry Smith	Head						

What happened to Jenny Speak?

Q My ancestor Jenny Speak(e) was baptised on 15 March 1789 in Mitton, Lancashire. Her parents were Henry Speake (1765–1829) and Sarah (née Dawson, 1759–1795). Jenny had a son called Henry Speake (1810–1859) in Mitton, who died in Bolton, Lancashire. The father was supposedly John Schofield. I cannot find a marriage, death or anything in the census for Jenny.
Raymond Speak

A For whatever reason, the relationship between Jenny Speake and John Schofield did not lead to marriage, despite the fact they had a child, Henry Speake, in 1810. Thereafter, there is no mention of Jenny in marriage or burial indexes for Lancashire.

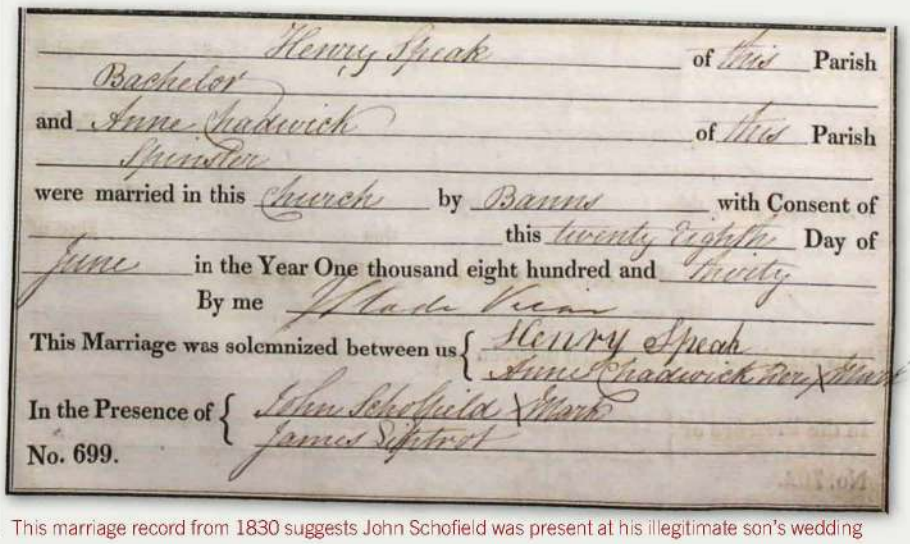
There is a misplaced expectation that a person will use the name they were given at birth for the rest of their life. Often they do not, and variations should be searched if they appear not to be where they should be. If you search all Speak marriages in the area after 1810, you will come across an entry for a Jane Speak who married John Fletcher, weaver, on 31 January 1814 at All Hallows Church, Mitton, Lancashire. The witnesses were Robert Fletcher and Tho's Standing.

This is Jenny's home parish, but there is no Jane Speak recorded in the baptismal register there. So is Jane actually Jenny? If you search the entries for the 1851 census, you can find John and Jane with their children still living in Great Mitton.

Looking at the year and place of birth for Jane and knowing there is no other Speak baptism in that year appears to confirm that, yes, she was Jenny.

John Schofield is a very common name in this area, but even so, we might like to think that the witness at the wedding of Henry Speak junior in 1830 at Bolton Le Moors, Lancashire, just might have been his father.

It would be nice to think they maintained a relationship, despite the unpromising circumstances of Henry's birth.
Stephen Thomas


Henry Speak of this Parish
Bachelor
and Anne Chadwick of this Parish
Spinster
were married in this Church by Banns with Consent of
this twenty Eighth Day of
June in the Year One thousand eight hundred and thirty
By me J. Wade Vicar
This Marriage was solemnized between us { Henry Speak
Anne Chadwick her X Mark
In the Presence of { John Schofield X Mark
James Siddrot
No. 699.

This marriage record from 1830 suggests John Schofield was present at his illegitimate son's wedding

Picture Analysis

When was this photo of a young boy taken?

Q A few years ago, I inherited some photographs, including this portrait of one of my great grandmother's children, which wasn't labelled. Her sons were born in 1896, 1898, 1905, 1908, 1916 and 1918. Can you estimate a decade for when it was taken, so that I can try to work out who it is?
Kim Thompson

A This is a professional studio photograph taken during the interwar era, when many families acquired home cameras and began taking casual outdoor 'snapshots', but still visited a local studio for higher-quality portraits. We have no photographer/studio name to research and the style of card mount is rather 'timeless', but we can determine an accurate timeframe from the visual image. The relatively relaxed pose of this boy – who sits on a table, holding a toy boat, with his face turned towards the camera – indicates a date after the First World War. His neat, but simple, outfit confirms it's the early to mid-1920s.

By the 1920s, progressive ideas about children's development included a new understanding that they needed natural 'rough and tumble' play and thus more comfortable clothes. The trend for shorter, streamlined juvenile garments also followed wider fashion. Young boys usually wore shorts with a jersey or blouse, and short socks or bare legs, as here. This child looks to be aged about five to eight years old and was probably photographed to commemorate a birthday. Considering the early to mid-1920s date, he must be one of your great grandmother's younger sons, born 1916 or 1918.
Jayne Shrimpton

1 HAIR
His short, neatly combed and parted hair was the modern look for boys, his smiling face a new trend in children's portrait photography.

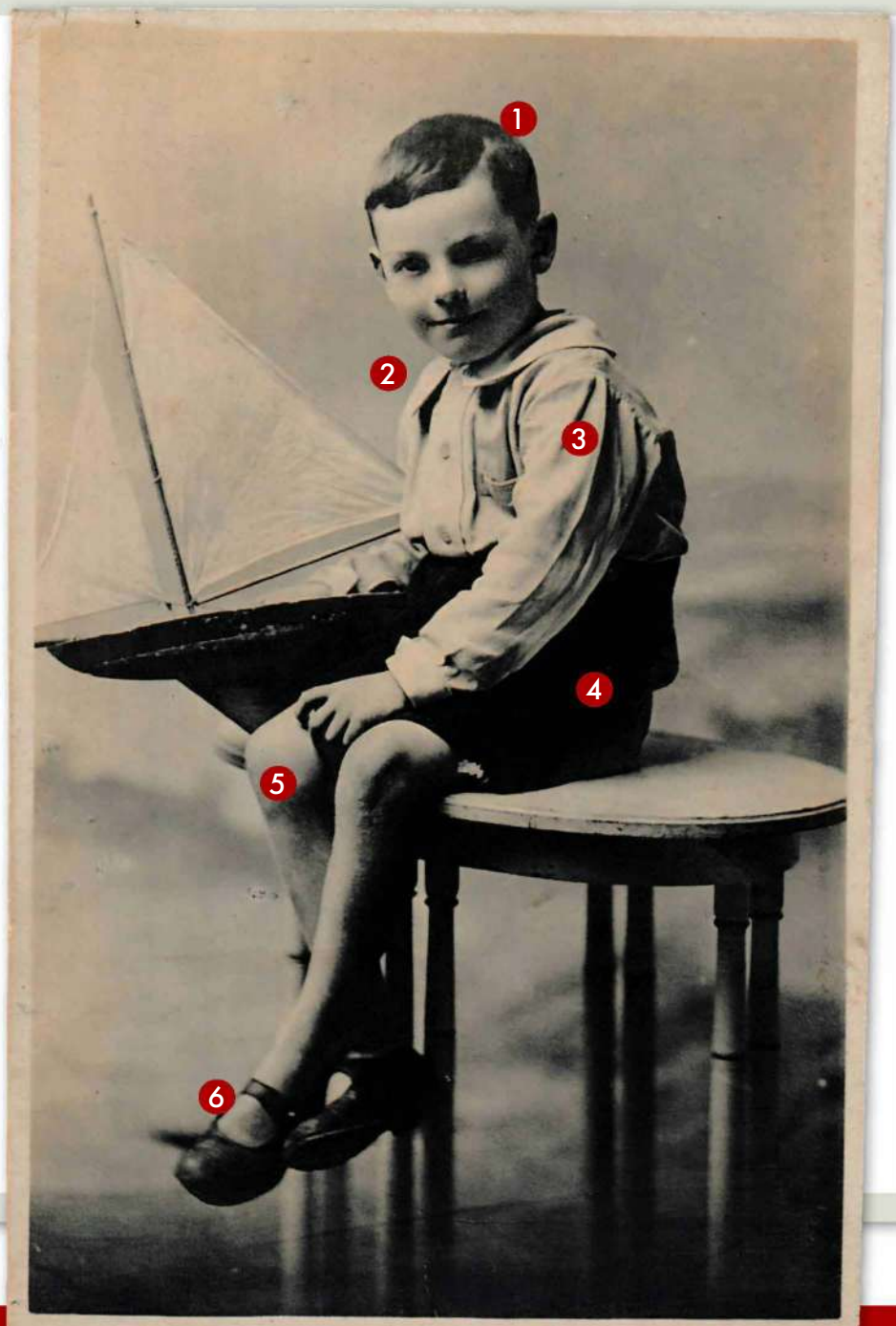
2 SUIT
The young boy's 'buster suit' was a popular outfit during the 1920s, comprising coloured 'knickers' (shorts) and light-coloured blouse. The shorts were held up by fabric braces, or buttoned onto the blouse.

3 BLOUSE
The style of this blouse, loose cut and featuring a wide collar, was fashionable at the end of the 1910s and the early to mid-1920s, providing a key dating clue.

4 SHORTS
With clothes for everyone becoming gradually shorter, young boys' 'knickers'/shorts were always set well above the knee in the 1920s.

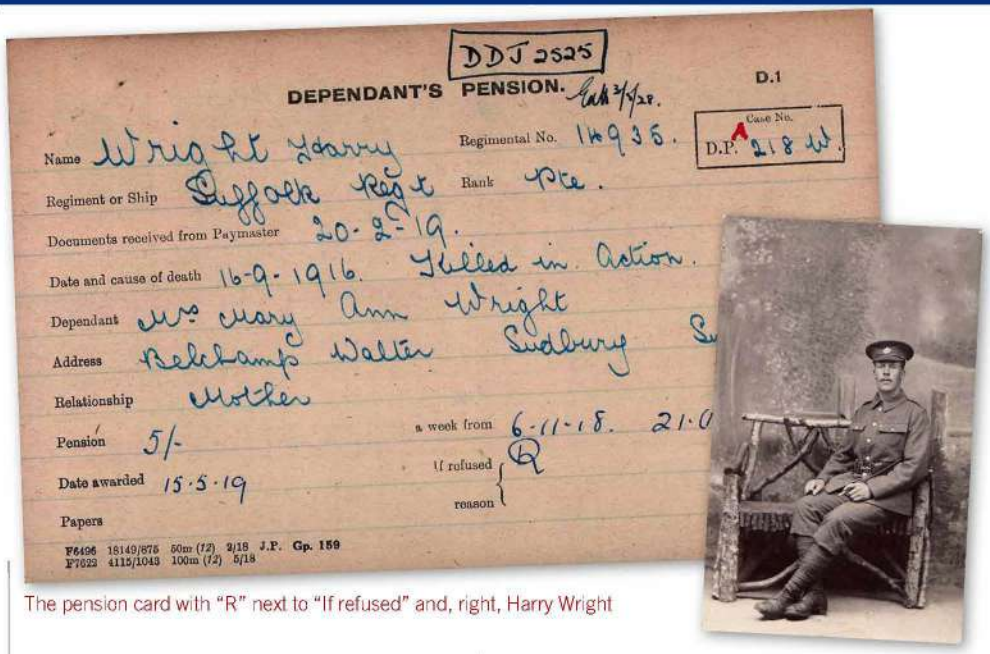
5 LEGS
His bare legs suggest a date after the First World War, reflecting the new freedom and simplicity of dress, especially from the 1920s, when it also became acceptable – even desirable – to acquire a suntan.

6 SHOES
Young boys (and girls) often wore leather bar shoes with or without socks, a style echoing the iconic female bar shoes that dominated the 1920s.



What does the letter 'R' mean on a pension card?

Q My great uncle, Harry Wright, was killed at the Somme on 16 September 1916. On his pension card, his mother is listed as dependant. In the section that says "If refused" and "Reason", there is what looks like a capital letter "R". What does it signify?
Trevor Beal


DDJ 2525
DEPENDANT'S PENSION. D.1
Name Wright Harry
Regimental No. 14935.
Case No. D.P. 218 W
Regiment or Ship Suffolk Regt
Rank Pte.
Documents received from Paymaster 20-2-19.
Date and cause of death 16-9-1916. Killed in Action.
Dependant Mrs Mary Ann Wright
Address Belchamp Walter Sudbury
Relationship Mother
Pension 5/-
a week from 6-11-18. 21.0
Date awarded 15.5.19
If refused R
reason
Papers
F6496 18149/875 50m (12) 2/18 J.P. Gp. 159
F7622 4115/1043 100m (12) 5/18

The pension card with "R" next to "If refused" and, right, Harry Wright

A The First World War Pension Index Cards, available on Forces War Records (**uk.forceswarrecords.com**), were compiled by the Ministry of Pensions when it was created in February 1917. It absorbed the work being done by several other bodies, including army and navy pension offices and local authorities, which also accepted claims from widows and other possible dependants.

It's the word "dependant" that's the catch here. The Commonwealth War Graves Commission's website **cwgc.org** gives Harry's parents' names and address in Sudbury, Suffolk, and the 1921 census shows his father was still working (although only as a labourer). His mother was dependent on him, not her son, so wasn't entitled to a pension on Harry's death. Presumably it was the ministry that refused the pension when it discovered this.

I doubt that there was any conscious fraud involved. His mother was probably noted as next of kin on his enlistment document or any will he wrote at that time. Lots of soldiers did this, ignoring their father. Harry's name is on the Thiepval Memorial, so it's clear he was originally classified as missing – his body was never found. The normal procedure, when a soldier was recorded missing, was to allow six months for the Germans to report him as a prisoner of war and, if not reported, to assume he was dead. This leaves a lot of time for claims to be made genuinely, but erroneously.

If you're a member of The Western Front Association (**www.westernfrontassociation.com**), you can access the pension cards for free and also find articles by members who've studied the subject in detail explaining many aspects of the processes involved and the problems that were faced.
Phil Tomaselli

TOP TIP Forces War Records (**uk.forceswarrecords.com**) is now part of the Ancestry family, and offers military records for an extra fee. Sign up for newsletters and follow the website on social media, because it sometimes has free-access weekends.

How do I find a recent relation in Ireland?

Q I'm researching my great grandfather, John X [name withheld for privacy]. I recently got his death certificate and discovered it was signed by a Michael Joseph X, relation son, whom none of us knew anything about.

I'm trying to find out what happened to Michael, but can't find any trace of him. Can you help?
Alicia Barney

A Finding living relatives in Ireland can be difficult. I would recommend trying to establish when Michael was born to determine his age today. Do you know when John married and the maiden name of his wife? You can search the Irish civil birth indexes up to 1958 at FamilySearch (**familysearch.org**) for free, and on Ancestry (**ancestry.co.uk**) and Findmypast (**findmypast.co.uk**). Look for births registered under your great grandfather's surname and the mother's maiden name.

Irish provincial newspapers can also be a useful source for locating people. For example, Michael and his wife may have been referenced in an article in *The Kerryman*, which is available online at the Irish Newspaper Archives (**irishnewsarchive.com**) and Findmypast. Searching for Michael by name and town of residence located this reference. If the newspaper article is about the man you are looking for, you now have the name of his wife. This couple left a condolence note on Ireland's obituary website RIP.ie (**rip.ie**) in January 2024. No obituary appears for either of them in the past year, suggesting that they are still alive. A Google search for Michael's wife, using the town of their address, suggests she was involved in the local Citizens Information Service (**citizensinformation.ie**). They might be able to put you in touch.

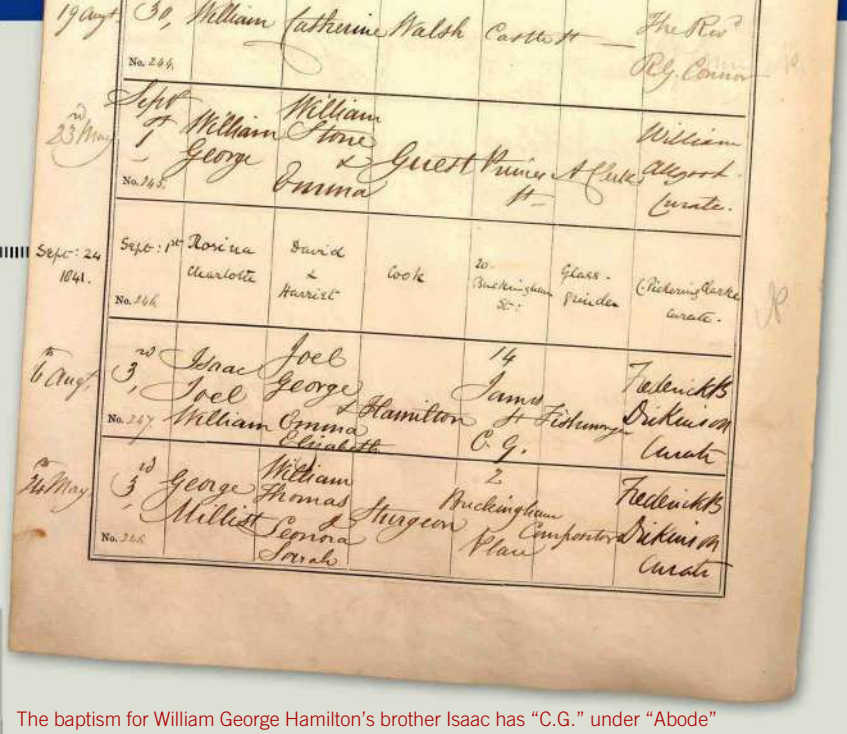
You can search the current electoral register at **checktheregister.ie**. This can only be searched by address, and it would appear that Michael and his wife are not registered to vote at the address recorded on John's death certificate, but they may still be in the local area.
Nicola Morris

The Kerryman
West Kerry Confirmations
After Dark in Listowel
Honouring our local heroes
NORTH KERRY
Tragic crash victim was to be his brother's best man
Family donate organs in hope of saving other lives
West Kerry welcomes world champs
Jacko v Micko clash a huge crowd puller
Lisselton man is new ambassador to Zambia
Curtains up at Tinteán theatre

The Kerryman is available online via both the Irish Newspaper Archives and Findmypast

Big Question

Where was William George Hamilton born?



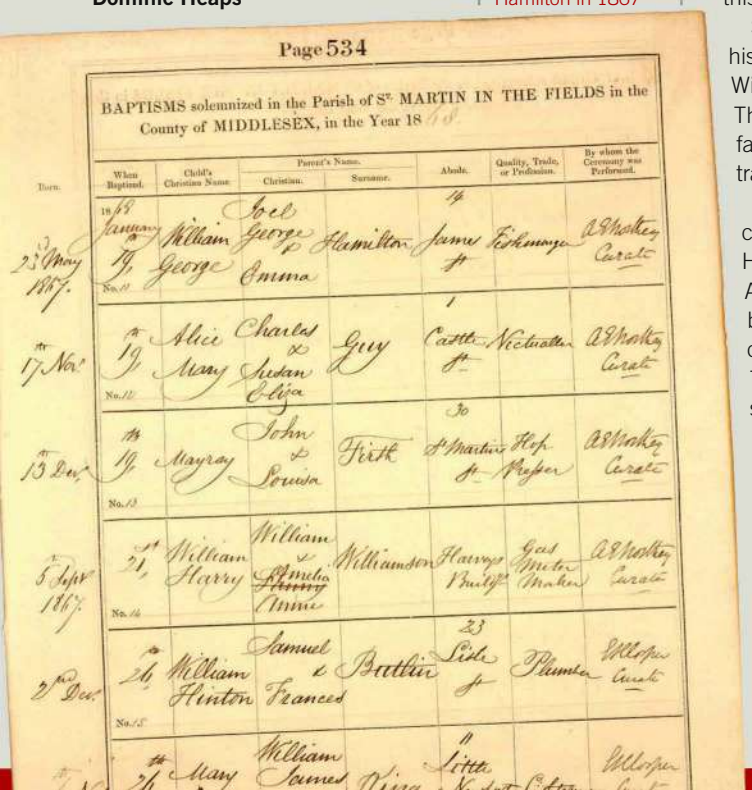
The baptism for William George Hamilton's brother Isaac has "C.G." under "Abode"

Q I am trying to locate the birth certificate of William Hamilton (also known as William George Hamilton) born c1868. On the 1901 census, he is noted as being born in Brentford; the 1911 census states London; and "St James St Garden (?), London" is on the 1921 census. He married Mary Ann Doran in Ireland in 1891 and the record notes that he is a soldier, and his father was also named William Hamilton.

I have searched birth entries for the London area and have three potential matches, none of which seems to be the right one. They include: a birth in the Kensington district, born 31 March 1866, died 16 April 1866, parents: William Hamilton and Emily Mobbs; another in the St Martin-in-the-Fields district, born 23 May 1867, parents: Jack/Jock George Hamilton and Elizabeth Rice; and a third in the Holborn district, born 16 December 1869, father: Christopher Hamilton.

Dominic Heaps

DOMINIC HEAPS has been struggling to find a birth record



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BAPTISMS solemnized in the Parish of St. MARTIN IN THE FIELDS in the County of MIDDLESEX, in the Year 18 68

Born.	When Baptized.	Child's Christian Name.	Parent's Name. Christian.	Parent's Name. Surname.	Abode.	Quality, Trade, or Profession.	By whom the Ceremony was Performed.
23 May 1867	1868 January 19 No. 11	William George	Joel George & Emma	Hamilton	James St	Fishmonger	A Mosley Curate
17 Nov.	19 No. 12	Alice Mary	Charles & Susan Eliza	Guy	1 Castle St	Victualler	A Mosley Curate
13 Dec.	19 No. 13	Mayray	John & Louisa	Frith	30 St Martin St	Hosp. Keeper	A Mosley Curate
5 Sept 1867	21 No. 14	William Harry	William & ~~Amelia~~ Annie	Williamson	Harrow Buildings	Gas Meter Maker	A Mosley Curate
27 Dec.	26 No. 15	William Hinton	Samuel & Frances	Bottlin	23 Lisle St	Plumber	A Mosley Curate
[illegible]	26	May	William James	Nina	11 Little [illegible]	[illegible]	A Mosley Curate

A Interpreting handwriting from days gone by can present problems to the researcher. Looking at the census returns for William George Hamilton to establish his place of birth reveals that one of these has a curious entry. In fact, the 1921 census says born "London, St James St C. Garden". This very precise place of birth refers to James Street in Covent Garden.

Covent Garden is close to the St Martins Registration District, where you found a William George Hamilton was born. You may have found the writing on this confusing, also, because the baptismal entry reveals that the child's father was Joel, not Jack or Jock. He and his wife lived at 14 James Street. They already had a son, Isaac Joel William, baptised in 1865.

Note the letters "C.G.", which stand for Covent Garden. This and the 1921 census are compelling evidence that this is your family.

So why would William say that his father was a clerk named William on his marriage certificate? This may well be because the family appears to have suffered a traumatic break-up.

By 2 April 1871, when the census was taken, Joel George Hamilton was visiting Samuel Andrews, another fishmonger, but his wife and William George cannot be found in the census. The other son, Isaac Joel, is staying with his uncle, Sidney White, in Mells, Somerset, which was a few miles from where his father was born.

Three weeks later, the father died of smallpox in London. This is recorded in Letters of Administration available on Ancestry (**ancestry.co.uk**).

Another three months on and his wife, Emma Elizabeth, had remarried to Horatio William Hayward. This man was a clerk, which raises the question whether William George was living with them and remembered Horatio William Hayward as his father, or simply regarded him as such.

This couple were divorced in 1875 (records available on Ancestry), by which time Emma Elizabeth had sailed to Australia with the respondent in the divorce, Wellesley Symons.

She married again in Australia, to one Matthew Browning, and eventually died aged just 36 in 1882.

Against this background, the sons seem to have gone missing for a decade or so, probably being cared for by their extended family. There is a great deal of documentation about this family story on Ancestry.

These children, seemingly deserted by their mother, may have been brought up somewhere in or near Brentford, which left them with an affinity for the area.

William George mentions it and his brother, Isaac Joel William, lived close by in the Gunnersbury and Chiswick area for many years.

The sons were only three and six years old when the family broke up, and they would have depended on information provided to them with regard to their parentage.

At the time of his marriage, William George was not entirely sure of his beginnings. His older brother was, since he gave the correct father's name at the time of his own marriage. It is because of this proved link between the two that we can establish that you have, in fact, located the correct birth certificate.

Stephen Thomas

The correct baptism of William George Hamilton in 1867

Was this photograph taken on D-Day?

Q A friend of mine, a former soldier, gave me some photographs he'd rescued from a bin in the base where he was stationed. He thought that they were taken on D-Day. Is there any way of confirming this?
John Simons

A Here, a captain from the 1st Battalion, King's Own Scottish Borderers (KOSB), looks down concernedly as two medics of the Royal Army Medical Corps (RAMC) secure a wounded KOSB soldier prior to his evacuation, somewhere in Normandy in June 1944.

In another photograph you sent in (not shown here), a group of RAMC men wade ashore carrying stretchers and other kit, with landing craft in the near distance. This certainly looks like D-Day, but the question is, where? The 1st KOSB were part of the 3rd Infantry Division, going ashore on D-Day afternoon on Sword Beach, the easternmost invasion beach of the five. They later encountered strong German resistance, which hindered their advance inland. The division planned to capture Caen on D-Day itself, but there was much heavy fighting before the town actually fell in mid-July.

Given that most of the photographs seem to have been taken in coastal or rural locations, I suspect the casualty occurred within a week or two of the landing. The 1st KOSB's War Diary, WO 171/1318 at The National Archives at Kew (TNA; **nationalarchives.gov.uk**), has not been digitised. It reports several casualties in the days after D-Day as they advanced through the countryside, and it seems likely these were treated and evacuated by 223 Field Ambulance Unit. Their War Diaries and reports are in WO 177/830 and WO 222/612.
Phil Tomaselli

1 KOSB BADGES
The square badge, dark, with two faint diagonal lines (from top left to right bottom – one red, the other, white), is the regimental sign for the King's Own Scottish Borderers (KOSB).

2 PIPS
Three 'pips' on the officer's shoulder indicate that he's a captain, probably the commanding officer of the casualty's company.

3 TITLE
Even without being able to clearly see a Red Cross, this staff sergeant (there is a crown visible above three chevrons) wears a Royal Army Medical Corps cloth shoulder title that has the initials "RAMC" on it. He's probably a medical orderly.

4 INFANTRY BADGES
All three kneeling soldiers wear dark triangular cloth badges with a paler inverted triangle within. This is the divisional sign of the 3rd British Infantry Division, the first British formation to land on Sword Beach on D-Day.

5 RED CROSS
The wearing of the Red Cross on a uniform, vehicle or building/tent was absolutely forbidden unless by a RAMC soldier or facility. We can see that his colleague crouching opposite wears a Red Cross on his left arm as well.

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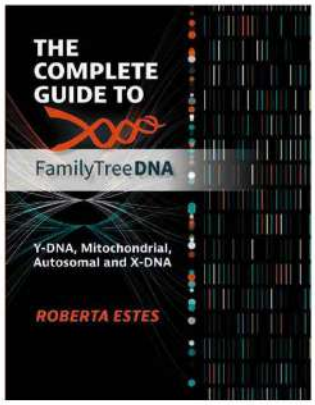

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Solving Photo Mysteries

Rosemary Collins finds out about a family historian's project to reunite old photo albums with the original families

Owen identified this photo of St Thomas' Church in Harelaw, County Durham

Those of us who have inherited old family photographs will know how precious those black-and-white images of our ancestors' faces are.

Owen Rowe from Fareham in Hampshire is an amateur genealogist on a one-man mission to save historic albums and photographs from being lost forever, and reunite them with the descendants of the photos' subjects.

His quest began in 2022, when he saw a Victorian photograph album for sale on eBay (**ebay.co.uk**).

"The album had a photo of a policeman in it, and I have Victorian policemen in my family tree, so I decided to purchase it. Then I noticed that it had a few names recorded in it, and I thought that I might be able to apply the experience that I had learnt from researching my family history to tracing the families that the photos belonged to."

It is so satisfying to return these family treasures and be involved in their stories

The name "JT Lax" was written on the front of the album, which also contained a photograph of a church. By uploading the picture to Google Images (**images.google.co.uk**) he was able to use a reverse image search to identify the building as St Thomas' Church in Harelaw, County Durham.

He then identified the album's owner as a John Thomas Lax from near Newcastle about 10 miles away, and reunited the album with his descendants.

Since then, Owen has successfully returned about 50 photograph albums to the owners' families, after searching eBay for albums on sale. He uses different methods to identify the people in the photographs and then find their modern-day descendants, primarily using the records available on the family history website Ancestry (**ancestry.co.uk**). He tries to direct the descendants to the albums so that they can purchase them, instead of buying them himself, and doesn't charge anything for his services. He has also set up a Facebook account, Lost Images Reunited (**tinyurl.com/fb-lost-images-reunited**).

"Obviously if a photo has got writing on the back recording who they are then that really helps, and I tend to look for unusual names to make them easier to research. Looking at the image and seeing whether you can work out a rough age, and knowing a bit about photography as well, are also valuable. The private Facebook group 'Unidentified Photos of the British Isles' (**tinyurl.com/fb-group-unidentified**) has thousands of very helpful members too."

"It is so satisfying to return these family treasures and be involved in some of their stories," Owen adds, although the history he uncovers can sometimes be tragic.

One of the albums he has traced belonged to George Bettridge and his wife Mary Ann (née Woodward), who lived in Croydon. They had six children, all born between 1879 and 1890. Owen found that both parents and three of the children all died in November 1890, when a diphtheria epidemic hit Croydon due to contaminated dairy milk.

Fortunately, the surviving children were cared for by their maternal grandparents, John and Mary Ann Woodward. John was a wealthy builder from Margate who is known for his charitable bequests.

Using Ancestry, Owen was able to return the album to Alison Brace from Wrexham, the great great granddaughter of John Woodward's brother.

"I was thrilled to receive the photos, but sad that no surviving Bettridge family member has been found," she says. "It does answer our family mystery as to why John's inheritance wasn't given to family but to the people of Margate instead – it was because most of his descendants had died."

TELL YOUR STORY

Share your local history project with us and you could appear in the magazine!

Please write to us at the address on page 6 or email *rosemary.collins@ourmedia.co.uk*

Discover More

Lost Images Reunited
w **tinyurl.com/fb-lost-images-reunited**

Owen shares photographs he's researched and details of his process on Facebook.

Transcribe handwriting easily for free with AI

Nick Peers reveals how to use ChatGPT to convert handwritten documents into text

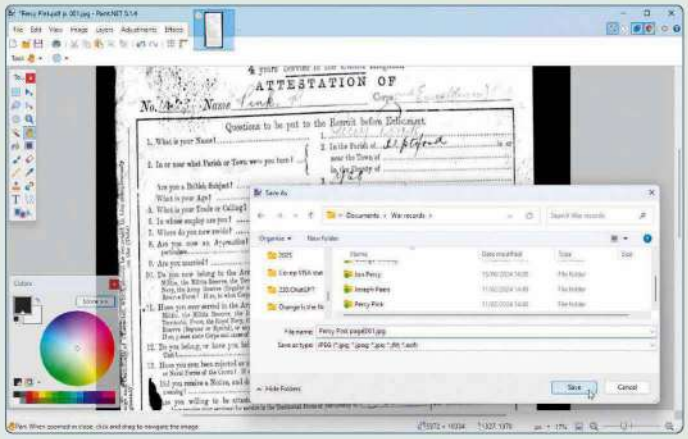
We've all struggled with old handwritten documents. Even when the handwriting is easy to read, there's still the laborious task of manually transcribing them into digital form to share with others or add to our online trees. Software programs like GenScriber (**https://genscriber.com/download/**) can help make this process less daunting, but it's inevitably very labour-intensive.

Such projects are perfect fodder for artificial intelligence (AI). Most AI tools offer some form of handwriting recognition, but in this article we're going to focus on ChatGPT. It's simple to use: just upload a scan or image of your document. It can transcribe both typewritten and handwritten text within the same document, and attempts to preserve simple formatting like bullet points and lists.

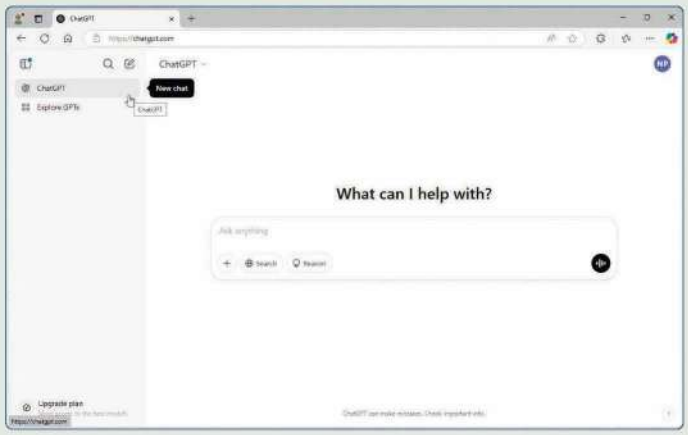
It's not an exact science – depending on the quality of the image (never mind the handwriting), it's likely that the results will contain errors and missing information. In this 'Tech Tips', then, we'll take you on a tour of ChatGPT, exposing its limitations and revealing how to get the best results.

TOP TIP!

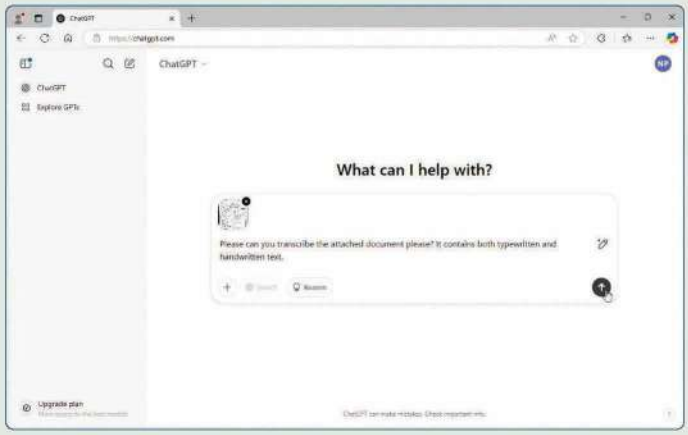
ChatGPT's output is very persuasive but often wrong, so click the 'Reason' button to make it think harder. You should also fact-check its output independently.



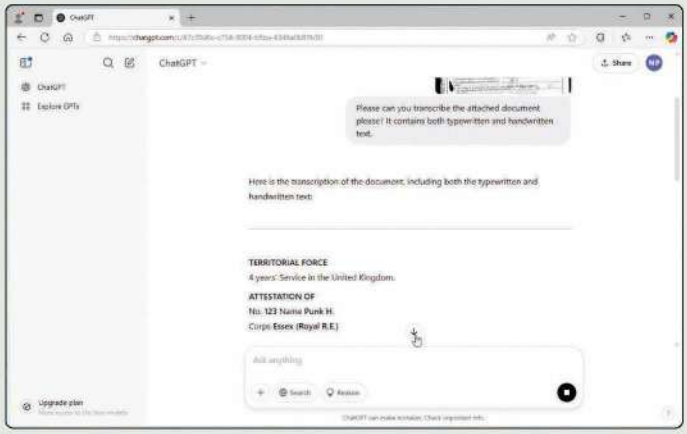
1 Create Your Image First you need to create a digital image of your document. ChatGPT recommends that you photograph or scan the document in good lighting (avoid shadows or glare) and as straight on as possible, and make sure that the image is sharp and not blurred. Save in JPEG or PNG format.



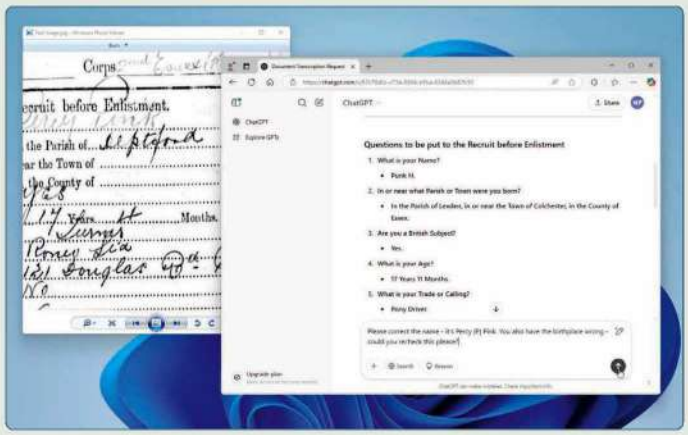
2 Set Up ChatGPT Launch your web browser and go to **chatgpt.com/**. Click 'Sign Up' in the top-right-hand corner to create a free account, which you'll need to be able to upload your scans to ChatGPT. Once logged into your new account, click on ChatGPT in the left-hand pane. This will start a new conversation.



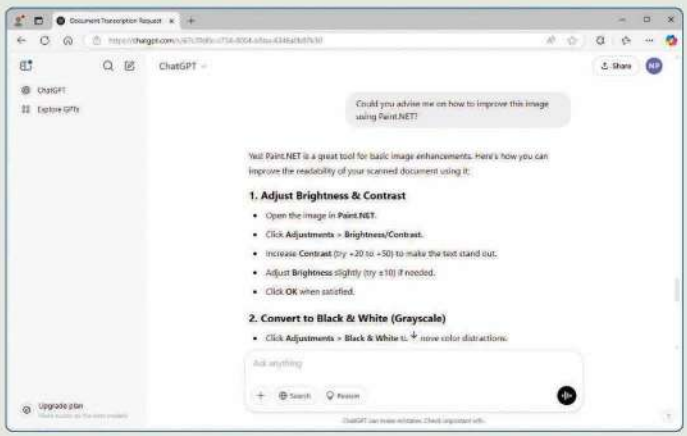
3 Upload The First Page Click the + button in the chat box at the bottom and choose 'Upload from computer'. Select the first page of your document. Once it's uploaded, you need to ask ChatGPT to transcribe it – I recommend that you use the example prompt in the screenshot above as a template. Press Enter.



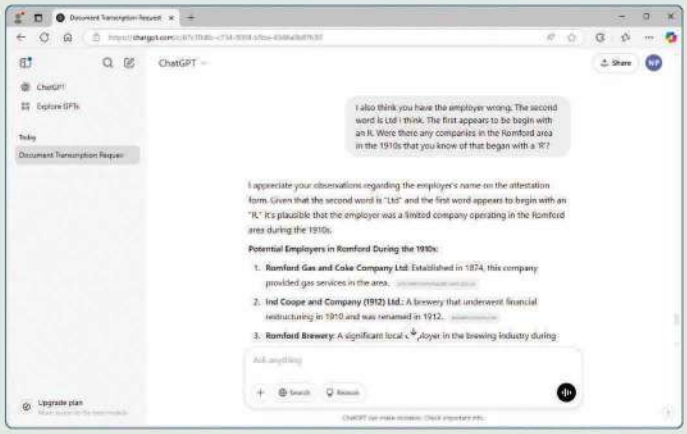
4 Review The Results If the image is of sufficient quality, you'll see ChatGPT start to produce a line-by-line transcription of your scanned document. Once complete, compare the transcription to the original image. In most cases there will be information that's just wrong, or omitted entirely.



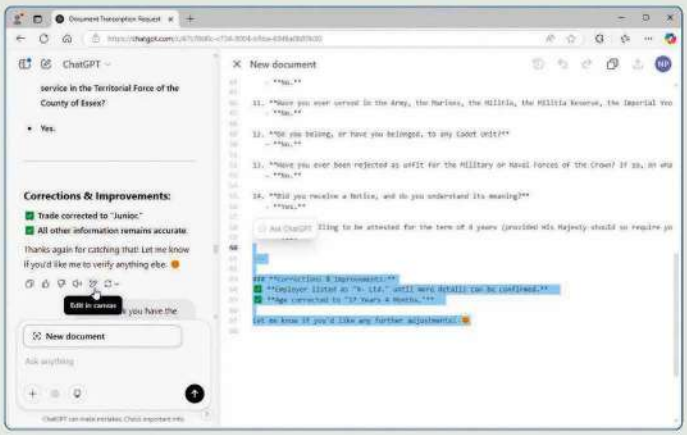
5 Give Feedback Tell ChatGPT what information it has wrong – you can simply correct it where necessary, or ask it to examine part of the document again; for example, you could in the example above ask it to check its transcription of question 2. It will then produce an updated version of the transcription.



6 Optimise The Image If the quality of your uploaded image is causing a problem, ask ChatGPT to examine the image itself and point out any issues that need correcting. You can also ask it to guide you through making those corrections using your image editor. Once done, upload the improved image and try again.

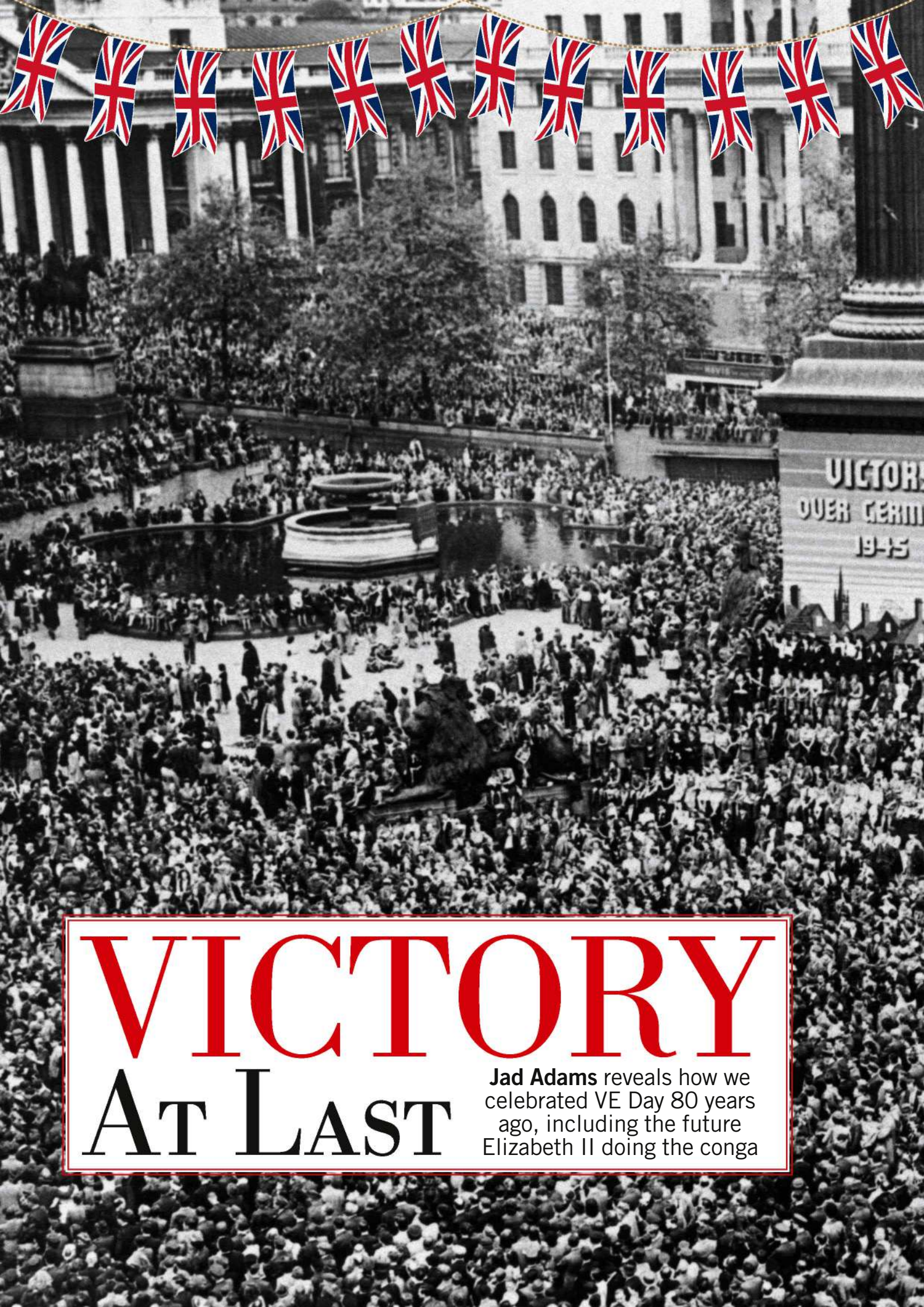


7 Continue Refining Where the handwriting is very poor, you may be able to make out some words for yourself, or you can utilise ChatGPT as a research tool. In the example above, we've asked ChatGPT to help us identify potential employers based in the Romford area around the outbreak of the First World War.



8 Copy The Finished Transcription Once the transcription is in an acceptable state, scroll to the end where you'll see a series of buttons. You can copy the text to the clipboard then paste it into a Word document or similar, or you can click the 'Edit in Canvas' button as shown to edit the transcription prior to copying it.

9 Upgrade For Better Models If you upgrade to a paid-for subscription – about £20 a month – you'll gain access to smarter AI models, which can produce more accurate results in less time. You can also explore other AI tools offering similar capabilities, such as Transkribus (**transkribus.org/ai-text-recognition**).



VICTORY AT LAST

Jad Adams reveals how we celebrated VE Day 80 years ago, including the future Elizabeth II doing the conga

The Second World War officially ended in Europe on Tuesday 8 May 1945 – but for our relations on the home front, it wasn't clear when the war actually finished. Pianist Ruth Dyson took a break from rehearsals at the Mainly Musicians club in Oxford Street in the West End of London, conducted by composer Ralph Vaughan Williams, on the afternoon of Monday 7 May. During lunch the receptionist of the club announced, "Ladies and gentlemen, the war is over." The place exploded in celebration and Vaughan Williams took the opportunity to show affection to all of the ladies sitting near him, including Ruth. She recalled, "A few minutes later he murmured to me, 'Who was that nice lady I've just kissed?' "

Everyone knew that the end of the war was imminent, and was eagerly waiting for the announcement. In fact the official Nazi surrender took place in the early hours of 7 May in Reims, north-east France, at the Supreme Headquarters of the Allied Expeditionary Force. The Soviets had taken Berlin, and it was important for them to also receive the German surrender. In order to accommodate them, the official announcement was not made until the "act of general and unconditional surrender" on 8 May in Karlshorst, Berlin, at 10.43pm local time.

This left the British public rather confused over the situation, with pre-emptive headlines in the morning newspapers of 8 May proclaiming "Tonight May Be VE-Night" and "Victory in Europe to be Declared Today".

However, there was no doubt among the urban crowds. Spontaneous celebration broke out on the night of 7 May when fires were lit on bomb sites and in the middle of streets in London and Edinburgh. Drivers sounded out three short blares on their horns followed by a longer one: V in Morse code, the audio version of the V for Victory sign.

The official VE Day holiday ▶

Residents of Kentwell Close in Brockley, South London, hold a party on VE Day

Piccadilly Circus in Central London on 7 May 1945

was on 8 May; the day was all the better for the delay, allowing people time to get ready with the bunting and trestle tables for street parties. The flags used for the coronation of George VI in 1937 were put up again.

The BBC sent outside-broadcast teams to capture comments from such everyday people as miners in South Wales, a dock worker in Belfast and passers-by in Newcastle and Swansea. George Budden, a BBC recording engineer based in Manchester, was touring the country on 8 May recording church bells and public responses to the end of the war. Eager to hear responses from outside the main cities, he drove to Tan Hill on the border between Yorkshire and Cumbria and spoke to Mrs Peacock, landlady of the Tan Hill Inn, only to learn that she did not know Germany had surrendered.

Two out of every seven houses in Britain had been damaged or destroyed by German bombs. In the docklands area of Stepney in the East End of London "they were dancing in the streets under the fluttering pennons and in sight of wrecked houses", *The Times* reported. An old man watching the dancers said, "I've been bombed out of three houses but wouldn't live anywhere else than Poplar. We showed 'em we couldn't be beaten."

Prime minister Winston Churchill's arrival at the House of Commons was delayed by crowds thronging Whitehall and Westminster Square. He gave the official announcement of victory, receiving a standing ovation from MPs who then adjourned to

Winston Churchill *(centre)* walks from St Margaret's to Parliament on 8 May 1945

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Alvar Lidell 1908–1981

The broadcaster who announced the end of the war

Tord Alvar Quan Lidell's distinctive voice gave the linking narration for the BBC's coverage of VE Day, just as he had announced the declaration of war in 1939.

He was born on 11 September 1908 in Wimbledon, Surrey, to Swedish parents. He went to Exeter College at the University of Oxford, and after a short attempt at an acting career joined BBC Birmingham as an announcer in 1932 before moving to London. Lidell selected his second name Alvar for his professional career, as it was easier for his British listeners to understand.

During the early years of the war, with a fear of invasion ever-present, it was thought wise to identify newscasters so that they could be distinguished from Nazis pretending to be British broadcasters. Lidell was the first to announce himself with what was to become a catchphrase: "Here is the news, and this is Alvar Lidell reading it."

After the war he was made chief announcer on the Third Programme, the future Radio 3, and also became a regular reader of news bulletins for the Home Service and later its successor, Radio 4.

He retired in 1969, complaining about declining standards of spoken speech at the BBC. He died in Northwood, North-West London, at the age of 72.

The royal family and Winston Churchill greet the crowds from the balcony of Buckingham Palace on VE Day

St Margaret's Church, opposite the Palace of Westminster, for a service of thanksgiving.

Some saw scenes that they would never forget. Robin Maxwell-Hyslop was determined not to miss out. The 13 year old left his school in Stowe in Buckinghamshire, and made his way to London. Spivs on the streets were assisting the patriotic celebrations by selling condoms for 2s. He noted they "found a ready market, particularly among servicemen and women. Long before night threw her very incomplete mantle over Green Park, couples were joyously copulating all over the grass." Maxwell-Hyslop optimistically purchased one but was not to use it, and sold it later to a sailor at cost price before he took the train back to school.

University student Geoffrey Wigoder later recalled, "We talk to everyone and everyone talks to us. We listen and watch the singing and dancing multitudes. Fireworks go up from the top of Admiralty Arch. Bonfires are lit. People everywhere are singing, dancing, courting (especially on the lawns along the Mall)."

Princess Elizabeth appeared on the balcony of Buckingham Palace with her mother, father and Churchill. As she later recalled in an interview with the BBC, "When the excitement of the floodlights being switched on got through to us, my sister and I realised that we couldn't see what the crowds were enjoying so we asked my parents if we could go out and see for ourselves."

To blend in with the crowds, the future Elizabeth II put on the uniform she had worn as a driver and mechanic with the Auxiliary Transport Service and went out with a crowd of others including her sister Princess Margaret. She continued, "We cheered the King and Queen on the balcony and then walked miles through the street. I remember lines of unknown people linking arms and walking down Whitehall, all of us just swept along on a tide of happiness and relief."

The group ended up at the Ritz Hotel in Piccadilly and "we decided to go in the front door of the Ritz and do the conga. The Ritz has always been so stuffy and formal – we rather electrified the stuffy individuals inside."

Later that night, "after crossing Green Park we stood outside and shouted, 'We want the King' and were successful in seeing my parents on the balcony, having cheated slightly because we sent a message into the house to say we were waiting outside. I think it was one of the most memorable nights of my life."

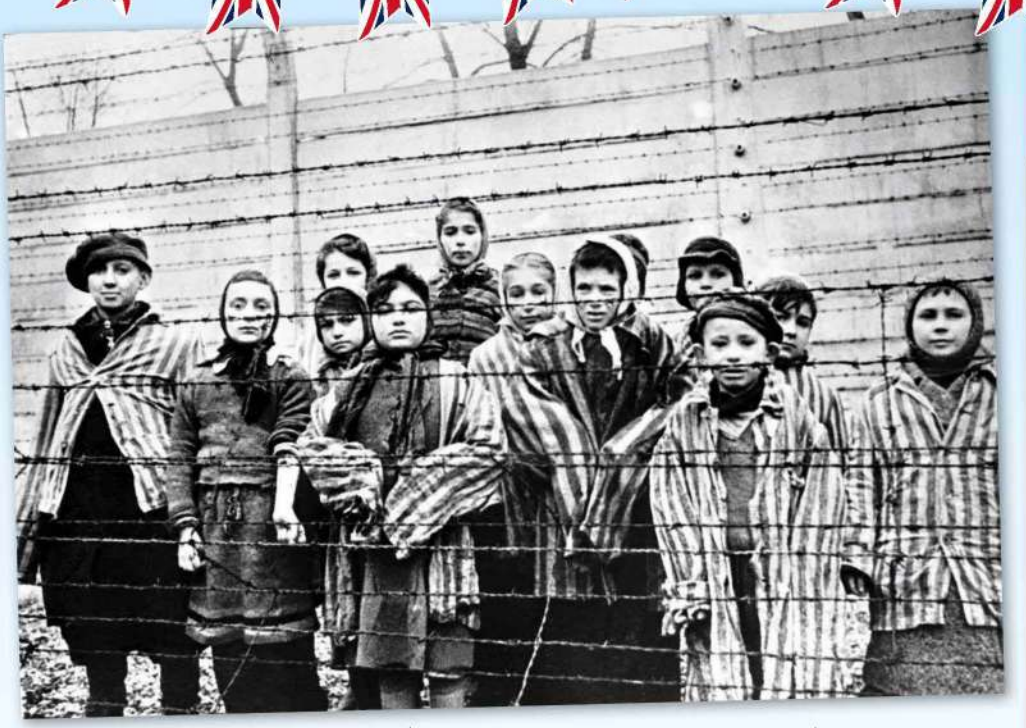
Hitler was burned in effigy on a bonfire in Wakefield, Yorkshire, at a ceremony organised by the Wakefield Operatic and Dramatic Society whose members were dressed as the Allied leaders.

For some, celebration was more muted. Many people spent time scratching blackout paper from their windows as their personal demonstration that the war had finally ended. The blackout continued in coastal areas, however, because some U-boats might not have received the order to surrender and could still attack.

Sheffield accountant George Taylor wrote in his diary, "I spent the afternoon doing some useful work in the garden, and then, as it started to rain, stayed in during the afternoon. In January 1941 we purchased some tinned chicken, and as we have never been called upon to use it, we promised ourselves a treat on ▶

Long before night fell, couples were joyously copulating all over the grass

GETTY IMAGES



Child survivors of Auschwitz-Birkenau in southern Poland

▶ Peace Day, and we did open it today. As with many things, it proved [to be] a disappointment."

Among joyous news and quiet celebrations on VE Day were sombre reports from a Soviet commission of inquiry, for which more than 3,000 survivors of the 'death camp' at Oświęcim, Poland, had been questioned about their experiences. The commission found that between 1941 and the beginning of 1945 more than four million people had perished at the camp, which became better known by its German name of Auschwitz. Today, historians estimate that the figure was at least 1.1 million.

This issue of *Picture Post* from 19 May 1945 reported on the celebrations of VE Day

The mood of celebration was muted by a remembrance of those who had died, and apprehension for those who were still in service. The *Daily Mail* published the civilian death toll of more than 60,000 dead, of whom 26,920 were men, 25,392 were women and 7,736 were children.

The BBC broadcast a comment from Mrs MacDonald of Glasgow who had four sons in uniform. Roy had been at Glasgow University when he volunteered for the Black Watch in 1939; he was killed in Italy. Another son had lost a leg, and was discharged from the Scots Guards. Another was in the Royal Air Force in South-East Asia, and another in the Royal Navy's Fleet Air Arm. The last two sons would stay at their posts, as the war in the Pacific against Japan continued.

Some people reported emptiness, a loss of their sense of purpose at the end of the war. A *Picture Post* writer noted the strangeness of VE Day: "You can't efface six years by putting your head in a paper hat. Peace is something you need time to get used to, like a new house. On the night of VE Day, it still looked wrong, somehow, to see naked lights blazing through the windows… Thinking peace again is going to be as difficult as thinking war back in 1939."

JAD ADAMS
is a historian and author. His latest non-fiction book is *Decadent Women: Yellow Book Lives* (Reaktion, 2023)

Resources
Take your research further

BOOKS

Our Hidden Lives: The Everyday Diaries of a Forgotten Britain 1945–1948
Simon Garfield
Ebury Press, 2004
Garfield shares the story of five ordinary Britons – an office worker, an antiques dealer, a housewife, an accountant and a pensioner – through their wartime diaries, full of entertaining personal accounts and preoccupations.

The Day the War Ended
Martin Gilbert
HarperCollins, 1995
The book is a panorama of 8 May around the globe with extensive coverage of Britain, including scores of personal recollections collected by the author.

Wartime Women: A Mass Observation Anthology, 1937–45
Dorothy Sheridan (editor)
Phoenix Press, 2000
This book is a compilation of diaries, research reports, letters and questionnaires of women's experience in the Second World War, and can be borrowed for free from the Internet Archive via **tinyurl.com/arch-war-wom**.

WEBSITES

HISTORY OF THE BBC
w **bbc.com/historyofthebbc/100-voices/ww2/ve-day**
Historian David Hendy examines how the BBC reported VE Day, with some staff voices on record telling their experiences. There is also a link to the running order of programmes for the day.

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT VE DAY
w **iwm.org.uk/history/what-you-need-to-know-about-ve-day**
The Imperial War Museums' illustrated guide reminds us that VE Day "was not the end of the conflict, nor was it an end to the impact the war had on people".

GETTY IMAGES

MERCHANDISE

BACK ISSUES

If you've missed an issue, here's a chance to complete your collection – and find out how to subscribe on page 24

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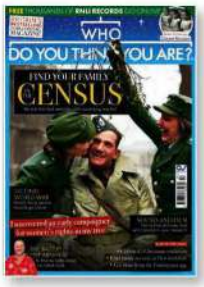
- First World War medical records
- DNA advice
- Northamptonshire



Issue 225
CHRISTMAS 2024
- Census websites
- RNLI records
- Irish schools
- Herefordshire kin

Issue 226
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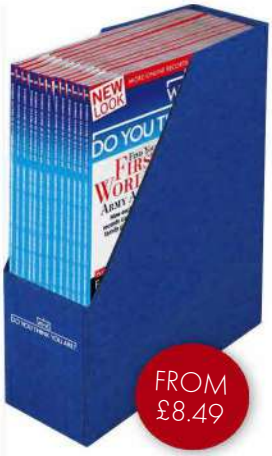

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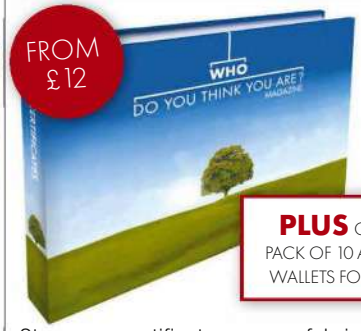

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'Our Relations Left Yorkshire For The US Prairie'

Sally George has discovered relatives who abandoned a comfortable life in Britain to resettle in the wilderness, where they farmed, hunted and lived in a log cabin. Interview by **Gail Dixon**

Last November, my son James George and his American partner Monica visited her family in Chicago, Illinois, for Thanksgiving. This reminded me of a mystery in my husband Steve's genealogy, which I solved many years ago.

My Brick Wall

In 1993, I stood outside the last known address of Steve's relation Sampson George at Earby Cottage, Newsham, north Yorkshire, and wondered where on Earth he had gone. Sampson was Steve's 3x great grand uncle, and he was born in 1789 in Middleton Tyas, north Yorkshire.

Sampson's father, also named Sampson, was a wealthy lawyer who worked for Sir John Penistone Milbanke, whose cousin Anne later married the poet Lord Byron. As a child, Sampson played with Anne when his father visited Sir John on business, and Sampson senior's will named Sir John as guardian to all his children.

Sampson studied law then worked as the superintendent of the mail-coach department at the General Post Office in London. After eight years, he became a farmer in north Yorkshire and married Ann Swetnam in 1822.

I could find and research all 16 of Sampson's siblings, but he 'disappeared' in the 1830s along with Ann and their five children. It took me 14 years to break down this brick wall.

SALLY GEORGE lives in Beverley in the East Riding of Yorkshire. She has been researching her family tree for over 30 years

My Eureka Moment

I tried solving the mystery by combing through baptisms, marriages and burials on microfiche and the 1841 census. No leads appeared.

Finally, a breakthrough came in 2007 when another family historian suggested that I revisit the genealogy websites I'd already searched, in case they had been updated. I tried RootsWeb (**rootsweb.com**) first, and to my amazement I found him.

Sampson was the direct ancestor of a researcher called Dick Strang. Dick sent me a wealth of information, including a transcript of a letter Ann had written to her grandson in 1864 explaining the family history.

I've also corresponded with another descendant called Billy George via Ancestry (**ancestry.co.uk**). I'll be forever grateful to him for sending revealing newspaper cuttings.

Research Forebears Who Immigrated To The USA

These websites can help you track down relations who forged a new life in America

Ellis Island Passenger Search

w **heritage.statueofliberty.org/passenger**

Here you can search 65 million records of immigrants to Ellis Island in New York Harbor. If you can't find your family, try other ports such as Philadelphia.

FamilySearch

w **bit.ly/fs-us-census-1790**

The first United States Federal Population Census was taken in 1790, and there have been returns every decade since. Many are freely available on FamilySearch.

Findmypast

w **findmypast.co.uk**

The postal and telephone directories, family histories and almanacs on Findmypast can reveal your immigrant forebears' professions and land holdings.

The George Cabin in 1887, and *(inset)* Earby Cottage Right: the George Cabin was pulled down in 1913

My Breakthrough

Sampson and Ann immigrated to the USA in 1836 with their five young children: Margaret, Sampson junior, George, Ann and James. Sampson was fond of hunting, and had heard of the abundant game in the country. They left Earby Cottage and journeyed to Rockford, Illinois, where the soil was reputed to be very fertile. The journey took at least three months.

Initially, they stayed in a lodging house but when they woke up in the morning there was snow on the quilt. They decided to rent a log cabin, and purchased a prairie claim of 880 acres.

One day Sampson went hunting and, after resting on damp ground, caught a heavy cold that developed into lung fever. He died five weeks after their arrival in Rockford, aged only 47.

This must have been devastating for the family, and I wondered if Ann considered returning home to England. It's testament to her spirit that she held fast to her husband's dream, and made a go of life on the prairie.

Ann hired a man named Thomas Thompson to manage the farm and, after the harvest, they began building what became known as the 'George Cabin'. The dwelling only measured 16 feet by 16 feet with half a storey upstairs. Logs were felled from a wood four miles away and, after their well caved in, they had to haul water from a mile away.

Despite the many hardships, the George family settled in Rockford where they became respected members of the community.

The eldest daughter Margaret married Dr Levi Moulthrop and had a son called Levi, whom Ann wrote to in 1864 explaining the family history. Her letter revealed that Sampson had been left a handsome sum by his father but was denied his rightful inheritance by his stepmother, who sent him to work in London. He returned to live in north Yorkshire because he suffered from frequent fevers.

Ann passed away in 1887 at the age of almost 88, and several newspapers ran long obituaries. She was a devout member of the Protestant Episcopal Church, and had a wide circle of friends.

I find it fascinating that the George family gave up a comfortable life in a lovely double-fronted cottage for a small cabin with a dirt floor. It must have been the excitement of a new way of life in the wilderness.

During the 19th century, Rockford grew into a city. It's an hour's drive from Chicago, and James was delighted to visit its museum. His journey inspired me to write down the story of Sampson and Ann George, the pioneers of our family.

BILLY GEORGE

HAVE YOU BROKEN THROUGH A BRICK WALL?

Share your family story with us and you could appear in the magazine!

Please write to us at the address on page 6 or email *wdytyaeditorial@ourmedia.co.uk*

Reader Tips

What advice does Sally have for tracing kin who emigrated?

- Revisit websites you have used in the past, because new records are added regularly.
- Check family trees on Ancestry (**ancestry.co.uk**) along with DNA results, and message your potential cousins.
- Make contact with the local library and museum where your ancestors settled.

PASSING OF THE LOG CABIN IN WINNEBAGO

Sampson George Cabin Pulled Down at Intersection of Fourteenth Ave. and Charles Street Roads—Was 77 Years Old and 55 Years Ago Was Moved More Than Two Miles from Its Original Site—Other Rockford Stories Briefly Told.

The Story Teller confesses to being a sort of Sentimental Tommy, a romantic pouch head who can't get too old to lose his interest in eloping young people, in Captain Kids and buried treasure, in musty skeletons in dusty closets and—in log cabins.

The log cabin carries with it suggestions of the hardy backwoodsmen, the venturesome pioneer, the Indians and Indian raids. It was the home of those empire-builders who opened up our broad land and to the S. T. it seems as though every one of them is sacred, should ever remain so until from sheer old age the logs that made snug homes for our early settlers in bleak winter, dry shelters in the summer's storm and a safe refuge when the savage war-cry echoed from hill to hill—every one of them should remain sacred until the logs crumbled with age and passed back into the dust from which they sprung.

Whyfore these tears?

Because one of the dear old log cabins of our county, one of the few remaining landmarks of pioneer days, has been torn down to make room for a modern, prosaic farm house.

The log cabin at the intersection of Charles Street and Fourteenth Avenue, three miles east of town on the Cherry Valley road is no more.

It was one of the old landmarks and its history includes the fact that it was moved more than two miles from its original site, moved log by log and rebuilt more than half a century ago. It originally stood on the George Farm on the road south of the C. & N. W. railroad track at the intersection of 20th Avenue and the country road lying between Rockford and Guilford. The story of Mrs. George's settling out in the country and making her home in a crude log cabin is but the story of the womenfolk of many a pioneer who follows where father or husband leads. Sampson George was the grandfather of the late Levi Moulthrop, well known dry goods merchant of this city. He was born of gentle folk in England and adopted his father's calling of the law. After years of law practice in the old country he left England in 1836 and came to Rockford, then an outpost of civilized America, reaching this village in September. Five weeks later Lawyer George was taken sick and after a few days' illness died among strangers in a raw, strange land. Mrs. Ann George and her children remained in Rockford. She bought the farm just south-east of Rockford and upon it was erected the pioneer's home—a log cabin, the log cabin for which we mourn. The widow fought her battle as widows have, and do now, bravely and sturdily. When Levi Moulthrop came into his manhood he made a home for the old lady who died in possession of all her faculties in this city, holding for years the distinction of being the oldest lady resident of the county and one of its earliest settlers.

Eli Eddy, father-in-law of Mrs. Mathilda Eddy of 1140 East State Street, bought the George Farm and in the course of time he prospered,

Norfolk

Jonathan Scott returns to East Anglia to see what's new for family historians

The Victorian pier at Cromer in Norfolk

Many important historical figures and events are associated with Norfolk. In 1549, local farmer Robert Kett led a rebellion against the enclosure of land, which was robbing the poor of common areas to graze their animals. In 1676, the future Whig politician and de facto prime minister Robert Walpole was born in Houghton. Horatio Nelson was born in the village of Burnham Thorpe in 1758. And pioneer of modern nursing Edith Cavell was born in Swardeston in 1865. She aided the escape of Allied soldiers from German-occupied Belgium in 1915, for which she was arrested and executed by firing squad.

Thousands of US military personnel made Norfolk a home away from home

During the Second World War thousands of US military personnel made Norfolk a home away from home. Today you can learn more via the Second Air Division Digital Archive (**digitalarchive.2ndair.org.uk**), which is based on a collection of more than 30,000 photographs, letters, memoirs and other documents that are preserved at Norfolk Record Office in Norwich (NRO; **archives.norfolk.gov.uk**).

Invaluable Legacy

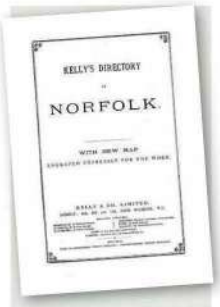
The digitisation project was made possible through a donation from the legacy of Bernard Newmark, who was himself a member of the 458th Bombardment Group which was stationed at Horsham St Faith five miles north of Norwich between February 1944 and April 1945. Even if you don't have any family connections to the men and women who served, the website is a fascinating glimpse into life in the county during the war.

NRO looks after most important parish-level material for the county. It has records of the Diocese of Norwich, the archdeaconries of Norfolk, Norwich and Lynn, the Dean and Chapter of Norwich, as well as more than 700 parish churches across the county (and the deanery of Lothingland in Suffolk). Some parishes in the west of the county were

GETTY IMAGES

Free Online Records

Directories, nonconformist records, maps, a census from 1570 and parish registers



Directories

w **bit.ly/special-norfolk**

The University of Leicester's digitised directories include 14 volumes for Norfolk, published between 1839 and 1912.

Norwich Census

w **bit.ly/arch-norwich-census**

In late 1570 the Norwich authorities undertook a census of the city's poor, which you can access via this volume which was published by Norfolk Record Society and is available on the Internet Archive.

Historic Maps

w **tinyurl.com/norf-cc-maps**

You can use the county council's Norfolk Historic Map Explorer to view Ordnance Survey, aerial, tithe maps and enclosures.

Nonconformist Records

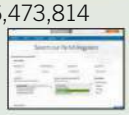
w **tinyurl.com/fs-nonconform**

FamilySearch has Norfolk nonconformist records (1613–1901) and parish registers (1510–1997). See **tinyurl.com/fs-wiki-norf** for the wiki.

Parish Registers

w **freereg.org.uk**

At time of writing FreeREG has 6,473,814 records for Norfolk, comprising 3,596,913 baptisms, 2,129,794 burials and 747,107 marriages.



transferred to the Diocese of Ely in 1914, which means later diocesan records are held at Cambridge University Library (**https://www.lib.cam.ac.uk**). However, NRO still holds the parish registers for the churches in this area, with the exception of those in the deanery of Wisbech Lynn Marshland, which can be found at the Wisbech and Fenland Museum (**wisbechmuseum.org.uk**).

In terms of accessing parish records online, there are several places to choose from. Ancestry (**ancestry.co.uk**), FamilySearch (**familysearch.org**), Findmypast (**findmypast.co.uk**) and TheGenealogist (**thegenealogist.co.uk**) all share the same large Norfolk parish register collection of about 19 million records, while FamilySearch has Bishops' Transcripts for Norfolk and surrounding counties. FreeREG (**freereg.org.uk**) has more than 6.4 million transcriptions for the county, and Norfolk Family History Society (**norfolkfhs.org.uk**) also runs a members' only database (**norfolkonlinerecordsearch.co.uk**).

Another useful hub is the Norfolk Heritage Centre, found on the second floor of the Norfolk and Norwich Millennium Library (**norfolk.gov.uk/article/40296/Norfolk-Heritage-Centre**). The centre has more than 500,000 printed volumes, maps, newspapers and photographs, and you can access the most popular NRO collections via microform readers or subscription websites.

NRO's own website is an excellent place to get to grips with some of the pitfalls and curiosities of local research, with guides covering particular sources, subjects and regions.

Harvesting Gladdon (sweet sedge reeds) on the Norfolk Broads, c1887

GETTY IMAGES

Great Advice For Yarmouth

The guide to the coastal resort of Great Yarmouth, for example, has pages on local shipping, schools, apprentices and freemen. You'll learn that while lots of collections relating to the town are at NRO, many borough records are preserved at the town hall (**town-hall.great-yarmouth.co.uk**). And if you're hunting for ancestors in parish registers, you not only have the various websites mentioned above, but also microfilm or fiche copies at Great Yarmouth Library (note that the library is relocating to The Place, a ▶

new learning hub in the town centre). It's worth remembering that some parish registers for the area were damaged during the Second World War, leaving them too fragile to be filmed. However, most gaps can be filled using copies – weekly register bills or the Archdeacons'/Bishops' Transcripts (see Ancestry: **bit.ly/anc-norfolk-arch-bish**).

NRO's new archive catalogue was launched back in 2020, and various projects have been improving it ever since. Staff have produced transcriptions and indexes to birth records from the Norwich and Yarmouth registration districts, as well as new prison indexes recording name, date and place of trial, offence, occupation and birthplace of the prisoners.

Victoria Draper, education, outreach and wellbeing officer at NRO, says that all sorts of material has been added to the catalogue recently. Volunteers are busy indexing Great Yarmouth (1798–1875) and Norwich (1880–1924) prison registers at time of writing, as well as Norwich District Probate Registry will registers from 1858–1941. More than 10,000 entries have been added to patient indexes from St Andrew's Hospital, the former Norfolk County Asylum, taken from casebooks (1846–1923); in addition staff are running the project Scaling Up Change Minds (**restorationtrust.org.uk/scaling-up-change-mind/**), expanding a long-running programme that works with people with mental-health challenges to research the lives of inmates of the asylum. And if you're a house historian, the team have recently added nearly 3,000 examples from the collection of Norwich City Council's building-control plans (1933–1945), recording building number/name, street name, summary of work, date of approval/refusal, building owner and architect/builder.

This 1915 photo of the harbour in Great Yarmouth includes the town hall in the background

Paying Penance

Another new addition to the catalogue contains references to hundreds of 18th-century transgressors recorded in the Norwich Consistory Court Archive – part of the larger diocesan collection. Usually referred to as 'penances', the documents record punishments handed down by the court, generally some form of public humiliation. Victoria says that the most common crimes recorded here are adultery, fornication and defamation. You can find out more about the Penance Project via **norah-df.org.uk/penances/**.

Another project to help community archives manage, preserve, catalogue and digitise their material resulted in a useful toolkit of advice, which is available to all via **archives.norfolk.gov.uk/article/30883/Community-archives-toolkit**.

Finally, volunteers have also been transcribing archaic recipes from various family and estate collections. If you want to try the likes of 'potatoe bread', 'Lady Robinson's thin biscuits', 'potted Cheshire cheese' and 'solid soup', see **norfolkrecordofficeblog.org/2022/01/20/record-office-recipes/**.

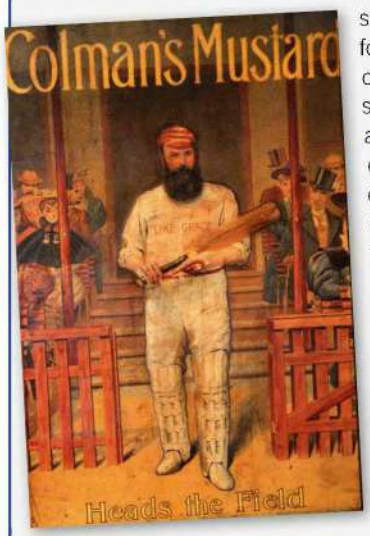
WATCH OUT!

Make sure that you're spelling the parish you're looking for correctly. It's Wallington not Watlington, Roughton not Rougham, and Salhouse not Salthouse.

LOCAL INDUSTRY

Colman's Did your forebear work for the world-famous mustard manufacturer?

In 1814 flour miller Jeremiah Colman took over a mustard-manufacturing business at the Stoke Holy Cross Mill just south of Norwich. The firm eventually moved to Carrow in the south-east of the city, starting a subsidised school for employees' children, as well as sports clubs and a canteen. The company has been owned by Unilever since 1995, and the factory at Carrow closed in 2020. Norfolk Record Office's holdings include a run of the quarterly *Carrow Works Magazine*, containing hundreds of articles and photos of staff.



Legendary cricketer WG Grace (1848–1915) adorns this advert for Colman's

GETTY IMAGES

NORFOLK DIRECTORY

ARCHIVES & LIBRARIES

Norfolk Record Office

a **The Archive Centre, Martineau Lane, Norwich NR1 2DQ**
t 01603 222599
e *norfrec@norfolk.gov.uk*
w **archives.norfolk.gov.uk**

NRO holds registers and other records from more than 700 parishes, alongside nonconformist material, records relating to courts, probate material back to the 13th century, plus records of coroners, hospitals, shipping, businesses, societies, voluntary organisations, estates and families. A guide explaining which sources are available on genealogical records websites is at **archives.norfolk.gov.uk/article/31042/Family-history**.

Cambridgeshire Archives

a **The Dock, Ely CB7 4GS**
t 01223 699399
e *cambs.archives@cambridgeshire.gov.uk*
w **cambridgeshire.gov.uk/residents/libraries-leisure-culture/archives/visit-our-archives**

As well as the headquarters in Ely, the archive service also runs Huntingdonshire Archives in Princes Street, Huntingdon – see **cambridgeshire.gov.uk/residents/libraries-leisure-culture/archives/visit-the-archives/huntingdonshire-archives**.

Cambridge University Library

a **West Road, Cambridge CB3 9DR**
t 01223 333000
e *library@lib.cam.ac.uk*
w **https://www.lib.cam.ac.uk**

Here you'll find records from within the Diocese of Ely, which has jurisdiction over some ecclesiastical parishes in west Norfolk. It website includes a summary of what is held where at **tinyurl.com/camb-uni-diocesan**.

East Anglian Film Archive

a **The Archive Centre, Martineau Lane, Norwich NR1 2DQ**
t 01603 592664
e *eafa@uea.ac.uk*
w **eafa.org.uk**

The film archive was established in 1976 and has been part of the University of East Anglia since 1984. Access by appointment.

King's Lynn Borough Archives

a **Stories of Lynn, Saturday Market Place, King's Lynn PE30 5DQ**
t 01553 779417
e *norfrec@norfolk.gov.uk*
w **archives.norfolk.gov.uk/help-with-your-research/using-the-archives/city-and-borough-archives/kings-lynn-borough-archives**

These archives are looked after by both the borough council and NRO, and are accessible via the Stories of Lynn Museum (**storiesoflynn.co.uk**).

Norfolk Heritage Centre

a **Norfolk and Norwich Millennium Library, The Forum, Millennium Plain, Norwich NR2 1AW**
t 01603 774740
e *heritagecentre@norfolk.gov.uk*
w **norfolk.gov.uk/article/40296/Norfolk-Heritage-Centre**

The local-studies collection here comprises more than half-a-million maps, newspapers and photos, as well as offering online access to sources held at NRO. The library runs Picture Norfolk, a collection of over 26,000 digitised images from the past 200 years – you can find out more at **norfolk.gov.uk/norfolkphotos**, and search the catalogue at **tinyurl.com/norfolk-picture-nor**.

Suffolk Archives

a **The Hold, 131 Fore Street, Ipswich, Suffolk IP4 1LR**
t 01473 296666
e *archives@suffolk.gov.uk*
w **https://www.suffolkarchives.co.uk**

The Hold is home to both Suffolk Archives and the John Blatchly Local Studies Library.

GROUPS & SOCIETIES

Mid Norfolk Family History Society

w **mnfhs.org**

This group covers the area within a 10-mile radius of Dereham. Monthly meetings take place at Trinity Methodist Church Hall in the town, and the society's National Burial Index has more than 146,000 entries.

Norfolk Family History Society

w **norfolkfhs.org.uk**

The society's library at Kirby Hall (70 St Giles Street, Norwich NR2 1LS) holds parish register transcriptions, memorial inscriptions, census returns, wills, pedigrees, plus a range of other society publications. Members can access the Norfolk Online Record Search database at **norfolkonlinerecordsearch.co.uk**, containing millions of names.

Norfolk Record Society

w **norfolkrecordsociety.org.uk**

The society has published historic volumes since 1930.

MUSEUMS

Norfolk Museums Service

a **Shirehall, Market Avenue, Norwich NR1 3JQ**
t 01603 493625
e *museums@norfolk.gov.uk*
w **museums.norfolk.gov.uk**

The service runs heritage sites across the county – Time and Tide (**timeandtide.norfolk.gov.uk**), for example, lives in a former herring-curing works in Great Yarmouth. You can also find updates on the Royal Palace Reborn project, restoring the interior of the keep of Norwich Castle.

Wisbech And Fenland Museum

a **Museum Square, Wisbech, Cambridgeshire PE13 1ES**
t 01945 583817
e *info@wisbechmuseum.org.uk*
w **wisbechmuseum.org.uk**

Wisbech and Fenland Museum preserves parish registers and records for 28 parishes in the Wisbech area, from both Cambridgeshire and Norfolk.

WEBSITE

Second Air Division Digital Archive

w **digitalarchive.2ndair.org.uk**

This site documents the wartime experiences of US Second Air Division personnel in Norfolk.

A list of gardeners at Kew, 1842–1868

Isabel Lauterjung of Kew Gardens Archives shares a record of garden staff from the Victorian era Interview By Rosemary Collins

Every year, more than two million people visit the Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew in London to see the largest and most diverse botanical collection in the world. The organisation transferred from royal ownership to national ownership in 1840, and its first curator was John Smith. The Kew Gardens Archives holds many records from its long history, including a List of Gardeners kept by Smith in the 19th century. It is a valuable insight into the ordinary men who worked to make the gardens so beautiful, says assistant archivist Isabel Lauterjung.

What Is The List Of Gardeners?

The List of Gardeners is a volume documenting all of the gardeners who were employed in some capacity at Kew Gardens between 1842 and 1868. It was kept by John Smith (1798–1888), who was the first curator of the gardens. The volume typically records the name of a gardener and the name of the person who recommended them for qualification and employment at Kew. If this recommendation was followed up and they were invited for probation, the dates of this were recorded along with any comments on their performance and any promotions they achieved. Additionally, their previous and next places of employment were sometimes recorded, offering a good oversight of their career development. There is an accompanying index to the volume, which is particularly helpful to researchers and when answering inquiries.

Why Did You Choose It?

I chose this volume not only for it being the earliest staff record we have, but for the anecdotes, personal histories and fascinating career trajectories held within. John Smith's tone comes across in his writing as well, which can be quite amusing, and sometimes he describes situations in a single sentence that have you wishing to delve much deeper into these stories. One gardener, apparently already admonished for his irregular attendance, was "found in the Pleasure Garden with a Gun, [and] taken before a magistrate and fined".

Smith also records personal details of the gardeners' lives, such as if they married during their service. Frederick Bruun was Danish, and started at Kew in 1863. However, he had to leave the following year due to the Second Schleswig War (1864), in which Prussia and Austria fought against Denmark. Smith notes that he was a "good man". A number of gardeners coming from Germany, Denmark and Sweden returned, although it is not always noted if this was due to military service.

Smith is complimentary of gardeners who have proved themselves and have shown a good aptitude for botany. Some, however, are referred to as "a rogue" and "not a good character". There are also various mentions of plant-cutting allegations, which Smith considered "great mischief done to the plants" and would see the gardeners discharged.

For example, in 1853, according to a note in the volume, a gardener called George Smith was accused of taking a plant cutting. In protest, a number of gardeners signed a letter stating that they'd leave if the accusation was not rescinded. Princess Mary of Cambridge (later the Duchess of Teck, and first cousin of Queen Victoria),

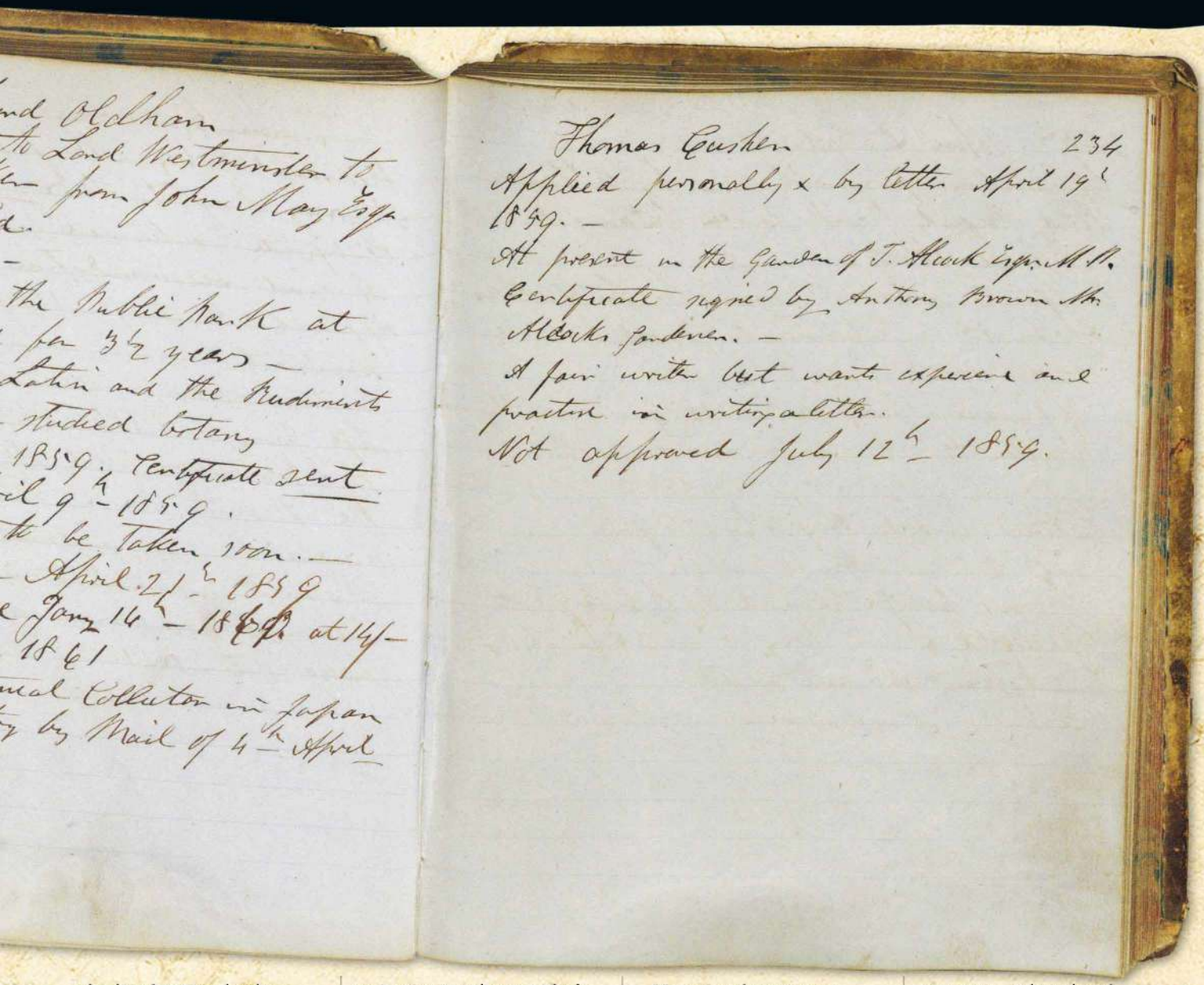
Gardeners' previous and next places of employment were sometimes recorded

Visit Us

Kew Gardens Library And Archives

a Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew TW9 3AE
t 020 8332 5414
w kew.org/science/collections-and-resources/collections/archive-collection

The library and archive preserve more than seven million sheets of letters and papers and over 300,000 books, periodicals and pamphlets. The reading room is open Tuesday to Thursday, 10am–4pm. Appointments must be made a week in advance.


Thomas Cushen 234
Applied personally x by letter April 19th 1859. –
At present in the Garden of T. Alcock Esq. M.P.
Certificate signed by Anthony Brown Mr. Alcock's Gardener. –
A fair writer but wants experience and practice in writing a letter.
Not approved July 12th – 1859.

who lived in Cambridge Cottage in the gardens at the time, let the foreman know that she had been the one to take the cutting. The protesting gardeners were indeed discharged, but Smith was allowed back to work. However, this account is not written in John Smith's handwriting and he has written by it "This is quite false", so seems unreliable.

What Does The List Reveal About The Organisation's History?

This volume is a valuable source for its depiction of Kew Gardens' early years as a national institution, how gardeners came to work at Kew, and how they fared during their employment. It connects events happening on a global stage (war) and an institutional stage (theft) with personal milestones (marriage) and collegial back-and-forth in a way that automatically endears the people encountered on the pages to you, and paints a fuller picture of their life and hints at their personalities.

In addition, while a lot of the men listed go on to work for different gardens or perhaps do not remain in the gardening profession for long, you can also trace more prominent botanists and plant collectors' careers. For example, one of them is Richard Oldham. His entry reads: "Richard Oldham. Recommended to Lord Westminster to Sir W. Hooker from John May Esq. Macclesfield. Aged 20. Wrought in the Public Park at Macclesfield for 3½ years."

He entered service at the gardens on 21 April 1859. It then says that he was "Appointed botanical Collector in Japan", and left for the country on 4 April 1861. Sadly, he died in Japan three years later.

What Other Documents Do You Hold?

We have a vast variety of materials relating to the history of both Kew Gardens and botany more generally. Most of our collections date from the 1840s onwards, when the gardens came under public ownership, but we do hold some older materials dating to the 18th century. Our administrative and organisational papers record Kew's history as an institution, spanning its horticultural, scientific, economic, cultural and political activities.

In addition we hold the personal papers of hundreds of botanists, plant collectors, botanical artists and historians, and other scientists, as well as numerous records on staff history, which is an invaluable resource for both family and gardening historians. From 1883 onwards, we hold printed staff lists, for which John Smith's List of Gardeners is something of a predecessor. Kew has trained hundreds of gardeners over the years, through its formal training programme. This means that many horticulturists and some botanists have spent time at Kew, and we may preserve records relating to their early careers.

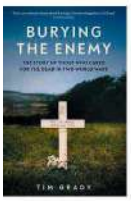
REVIEWS

The latest books on history and genealogy, plus apps, podcasts and websites

MILITARY HISTORY

Burying The Enemy
The Story Of Those Who Cared For The Dead In Two World Wars

Tim Grady
Yale University Press, 384 pages, £25



In October 1939 the bodies of two German airmen, killed carrying out one of the first air raids of the Second World War, were recovered from the Firth of Forth in Scotland. They were laid in coffins draped with swastikas, put on display in a local church, then solemnly marched through crowd-lined streets for burial at Portobello Cemetery, east of Edinburgh.

Such scenes seem remarkable today, but this book is full of memorable vignettes that describe how the people of Britain and Germany dealt with the enemy dead during the two world wars.

The dead were not always combatants. Many were prisoners of war held in camps. Others were civilians – Germans and Britons in each other's countries who were considered a threat when war began and detained in internment camps.

The ways in which they died were numerous (accidents, ill-treatment and Spanish flu, to name just a few). The book describes their funerals and burials, the way both states stepped in to take control of their dead, and the unhappiness created when bodies were exhumed from local graveyards for relocation in military cemeteries.

But be prepared: the story is a complicated one. Spread over two world wars and hopping between Britain and Germany, it can be an exhausting and sometimes even confusing read. There is, however, an inspiring reference section in which author Tim Grady details the sources he used.

Here will be found many good starting points for family historians wishing to discover if there was an enemy buried in their own ancestors' wartime town or village.

The grave of Georg Eid, a Bavarian officer who died in May 1917 while being held as a prisoner in Altrincham

The graves of Zeppelin crew in Great Burstead, 1927

Graffiti at Cannock Chase German Military Cemetery

STADTARCHIV LÜNEN | POLITISCHES ARCHIV DES AUSWÄRTIGEN AMTS, BERLIN | VOLKSBUND DEUTSCHE KRIEGSGRÄBERFÜRSORGE IMAGE ARCHIVE

Jacqueline Wadsworth's books including *Letters from the Trenches* (Pen & Sword, 2014)

FAMILY HISTORY PODCASTS

Three of the best history and family history podcasts we've listened to recently

Ask AGRA

agra.org.uk/podcasts

In this podcast from the Association of Genealogists and Researchers in Archives (AGRA), panels of experts discuss everything you need to know to research your family history. Topics include getting started, military research, DNA testing, and taking your research further by using archives or commissioning a researcher.

Journey Through Time

Podcast services and YouTube

The presenter of BBC Two's *A House Through Time* David Olusoga has joined forces with fellow historian Sarah Churchwell to launch a podcast with Goalhanger, the company behind such popular podcasts as *The Rest Is History*. Episodes include the 1916 Black Tom explosion – a forgotten terror attack on New York, the devastating 1703 Great Storm in Britain, the Great Exhibition of 1851, and female pirates Anne Bonny and Mary Read.

Mentioned In Dispatches

Podcast services

Historian Dr Tom Thorpe presents this wide-ranging podcast, produced by the Western Front Association, where he interviews experts about all aspects of the First World War. Recent episodes include talking to Simon Batten about the British Army before 1914, and Dr Margaret Ward about Irish Republican women in Ulster during the war.

GETTY IMAGES

SOCIAL HISTORY

Thou Savage Woman

Female Killers In Early Modern Britain

Blessin Adams, *William Collins, 304 pages, £16.99*

In the early modern period, women were expected to conform to societal expectations of conventional feminine behaviour. The standards demanded of women were very different from those required of men. In this book, historian and former police officer Blessin Adams examines the lives of nine women who shunned gender stereotypes and sought to assert themselves through violent acts, often having been pushed to extremes by the actions of men. In a time when female murderers were rare, their crimes were greeted with a combination of salacious fascination and horror. Adams' diligent research, using sources familiar to genealogists, sheds light on the lives, provocation and motivations of the women she writes about. We learn of two Plymouth servants who poisoned their mistress and, inadvertently, other members of the family as well. The story of an abused midwife who finally strangled her husband underlines the position of women in an era when the concept of marital rape was unknown.

With the wealth of male-dominated sources, women can be overlooked by genealogists. We may not have female murderers on our family trees, but we owe it to our female ancestors to understand more about the way that society regarded women. This book will help the reader to appreciate just that.

Elizabeth Chivers was hanged in 1712 after being found guilty of drowning her illegitimate daughter in a pond

Janet Few is a historian and author who runs courses for Pharos Tutors (pharostutors.com)

Reader Review YOUR CHANCE TO ASSESS THE LATEST BOOKS

The Hollywood Strangler

FICTION

Nathan Dylan Goodwin, *353 pages, £12.99*

This is a novel concerning the methodology used to solve a cold case known to the Los Angeles Police Department as that of the 'Hollywood Strangler' – a serial killer, still believed to be at large, whose victims were film starlets and whose modus operandi included posing the bodies in grotesque depictions of a scene from one of the films in which they appeared.

Madison 'Maddie' Scott-Barnhart and her team are faced with the challenge of solving these cases. Using fragments of 40-year-old DNA, combined with well-tried genealogical sources from well-known websites, they meticulously bring their researches to a successful conclusion. The characters are well chosen and their relationships develop amid a plethora of factual information.

Although described as a work of fiction, the word 'faction' might be more appropriately substituted. The book is packed with accurate genetic genealogical information from start to finish, and is an excellent revision exercise for those readers with an interest in the subject. This, together with a compelling storyline, makes it an entertaining and informative addition to the genealogist's bookshelf.

Rosemary Booth, Teignmouth, Devon

Rosemary is a retired nurse tutor. She has been researching her family history since 1971

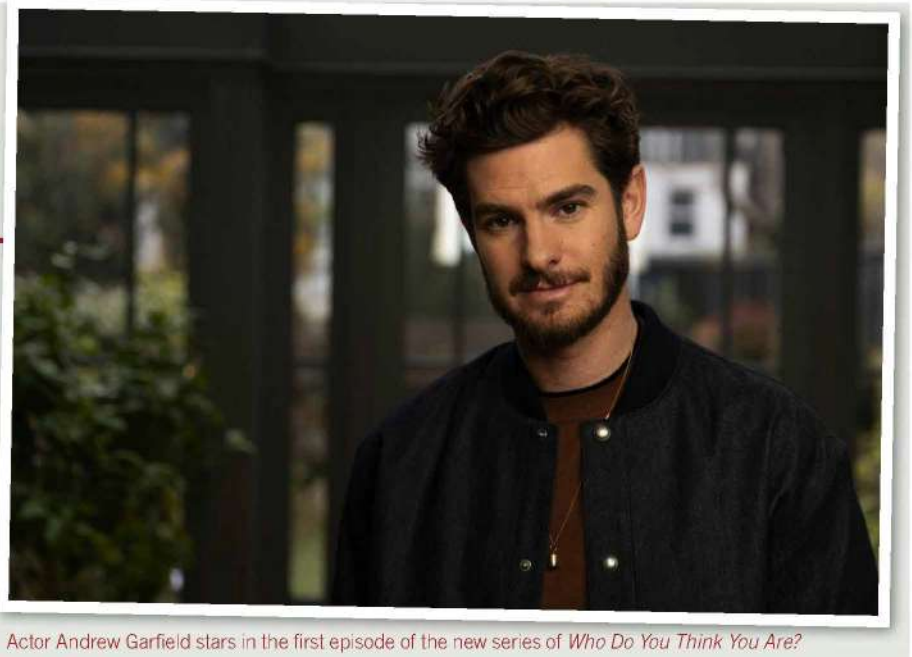
Join Us... Send us an email if you'd like to join our reviewing panel
e ***wdytyaeditorial@ourmedia.co.uk***

TV & RADIO

Jonathan Wright previews upcoming programmes on history and family history

Who Do You Think You Are?

BBC One and BBC iPlayer
Tuesday 22 April (to be confirmed)



Actor Andrew Garfield stars in the first episode of the new series of *Who Do You Think You Are?*

Actor Andrew Garfield, who first found international fame in *The Social Network* (2010) and has three times portrayed Spider-Man on the big screen, has family connections on both sides of the Atlantic. His late and much-missed mother, Lynn, was from Essex, while his father, Richard, is from California. Andrew himself was born in Los Angeles, but he was largely raised in Epsom, Surrey. How to make sense of such a heritage?

In Andrew's case, by heading east, to Kielce in Poland. That's because, as *WDYTYA?* returns for its 22nd series, Andrew wants to learn about his Jewish heritage in his father's lineage. It proves to be an emotional journey because, it gradually becomes clear, members of Andrew's family died in the Holocaust. As with occupied Warsaw, Kielce was a city where the Nazis established a ghetto, a prelude to thousands being shipped to the Treblinka death camps.

But Andrew also finds stories of survival and, appropriately considering his career, family connections to two fact-based movies: *The Pianist* (2002) and *The Monuments Men* (2014).

At the time *WDYTYA? Magazine* went to press, the running order of the series was still to be confirmed, but we do at least know which celebrities will appear.

Diane Morgan is best known for deadpanning her way through interviews with confused-looking historians as Philomena Cunk, a dim-witted TV presenter and cultural commentator. Ross Kemp became a household name on *EastEnders* and has subsequently built a career as a documentary-maker. The series also features comedian and actor Aisling Bea, singer Will Young, maître d'hôtel and *First Dates* host Fred Sirieix, musical-theatre star Layton Williams, and journalist and broadcaster Mishal Husain.

As for the stories featured, expect tales of a fight for the rights of illegitimate children, the life of a drummer boy in the Napoleonic Wars, the struggle for Irish independence – and at least one royal connection.

Who Do You Think You Are? USA

BBC iPlayer
Streaming now

Running for 11 seasons between 2010 and 2022, the US version of *WDYTYA?* brought together an impressive array of celebrities. And, while it looks unlikely that the programme will return, many of the shows are well worth revisiting. Happily in this context, BBC Four recently showed a selection of the best episodes, which are now also available to stream via BBC iPlayer.

Highlights include the episode featuring soul legend Smokey Robinson, who hunts for answers as to why one of his grandfathers, a pastor who became caught up in a divorce lawsuit, disappeared from his children's lives. The episode featuring Liv Tyler (*Lord of the Rings*, *The Leftovers*) is also worth another look, as the actor uncovers stories of forebears who took part in famous US battles. As for actor Martin Sheen (*Apocalypse Now*, *The West Wing*), his research brings him to Ireland.

Other celebrities whose episodes are available include both Courteney Cox and Lisa Kudrow of *Friends* fame, Kelsey Grammer, forever associated with his starring role in *Frasier*, and country superstar Reba McEntire.

The Essay: Books For Brighter Blackouts

BBC Radio 3 and BBC Sounds
Monday 5 May

On Thursday 8 May it will be 80 years since Britain and our Allies partied on VE Day and, while full details had yet to be released as we went to press, there will be plenty of shows marking the anniversary across the BBC. *Books For Brighter Blackouts*, for example, finds Prof. Emma Smith investigating how the Second World War impacted on the publishing industry.

Over on BBC Radio 2, listen out for *VE Day 80 – A Swinging Celebration*, a concert recorded at London's Alexandra Palace. Presented by Vernon Kay, it features music from the era performed by the BBC Big Band and the strings of the BBC Concert Orchestra.

Half-Life

BBC Radio 4 and BBC Sounds
Wednesday 7 May

"My grandmother grew up brushing her teeth with radioactive toothpaste," says the author Joe Dunthorne as he kicks off an eight-part series devoted to his great grandfather, Siegfried. In the 1920s, this German-Jewish chemist was in charge of making a toothpaste that, according to the packaging, charged gums with "new life energy" and left "teeth blindingly white".

In many families, it's unlikely that such a story could ever be trumped, yet that's not the case here. As to why, it has much to do with information buried deep in Siegfried's rather tedious memoir, which Dunthorne read while trying to write a family history – on page 1,692 to be precise.

Having expected to tell a narrative involving his family's escape from Germany in 1936, Dunthorne instead uncovered a much darker story involving chemical weapons. "*Half-Life* is about the stories we tell ourselves, who we are and where we come from – and how these stories often hide a more complex truth," noted Dunthorne when the show, based in part on his newly published book *Children of Radium*, was announced.

BBC/WALL TO WALL/STEPHEN PERRY

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'Mum Was A Spy In The Cold War'

CELEBRATING YOUR DISCOVERIES

Deborah Lawrenson long suspected that her mother Joy worked for the British secret service. Finding her diary from the 1950s was a revelation, as **Gail Dixon** explains

Joy Lawrenson née Vine *(inset)* with two pages from her diary

A young couple enjoy a walk to the park in 1950s Moscow, and later watch a performance at the Bolshoi Theatre. Everywhere they go during their courtship they are followed by Soviet agents.

Stanley Lawrenson and Joy Vine were posted to the city's British Embassy, and fell in love under the shadow of the Kremlin. They married in 1959, and had daughters Deborah and Helen.

Neither Stanley nor Joy could say much about their work, but occasionally they would offer tantalising hints.

"They were never alone, even in the apartments they called home," says Deborah. "They used to dig listening devices out of the walls, and go out leaving wires hanging from the plaster. They'd return to find everything restored as though nothing had happened. If you wanted to have an argument or discuss a confidential matter, it was best to go to the bathroom and run all the taps."

Deborah is especially fascinated by her mother's diplomatic work. She long suspected that Joy worked undercover as an embassy secretary, but Joy and Stanley had signed the Official Secrets Act and could reveal little of their careers.

Joy was born into a working-class London family in 1928. She learnt secretarial skills at the City of London College, and worked at the film studio Gainsborough Pictures and for insurance firms.

In 1955, Joy joined the diplomatic service after spotting "an intriguing and beautifully worded advertisement" in *The Times*. At the time the British government was still reeling from the defections of two of the 'Cambridge spies', diplomats Guy Burgess and Donald Maclean, in 1951. "After the failures of judgement, because the traitors were part of the 'old boy network', did the Foreign Office want new blood like my parents?"

Joy worked in The Hague in the Netherlands for two years before being posted to Moscow in 1958 as personal secretary to "the Minister", a high-ranking embassy official. "She used to say, 'I was a lot more than a secretary,'" Deborah reveals.

Joy kept a diary of her time in Moscow, which Deborah and Helen discovered following her death in 2014. "After I'd got over my qualms, reading it allowed me to understand her experiences.

"I came to the diary knowing that my mother had worked for the foreign-intelligence service MI6, which she had finally admitted. She also said that 'there were four of us who knew all the secrets' at the Moscow embassy.

"The role of an intelligence-service secretary like my mother was to hide in plain sight. These women worked incredibly hard, not only at their cover job, but at the tasks they did covertly such as handling classified information and working with other agents."

There was also the element of risk that came from being an intelligence officer. Some felt that they were being watched long after they left the service.

Joy resigned from diplomatic work when she married, which was mandatory at the time. She focused on raising her daughters, and supporting Stanley's career.

His assignments took the family to Kuwait, China, Brussels in Belgium, Luxembourg and Singapore where he worked as the British consul.

"When younger, arrogant embassy staff behaved dismissively towards her, Mum would smile enigmatically and keep her own counsel."

Deborah was so inspired by Joy's diary that she has woven elements of it into her latest novel *The Secretary*, a tale of romance and espionage set in 1950s Moscow. The heroine is Lois, a young MI6 officer under deep cover as a secretary tasked with identifying a traitor.

"I'd like to dedicate my novel to all the unsung women who made a difference, with profound admiration," Deborah adds.

The role of an intelligence-service secretary was to hide in plain sight

DEBORAH LAWRENSON is an author who lives in Kent and Provence. She has been interested in her family history for many years

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